

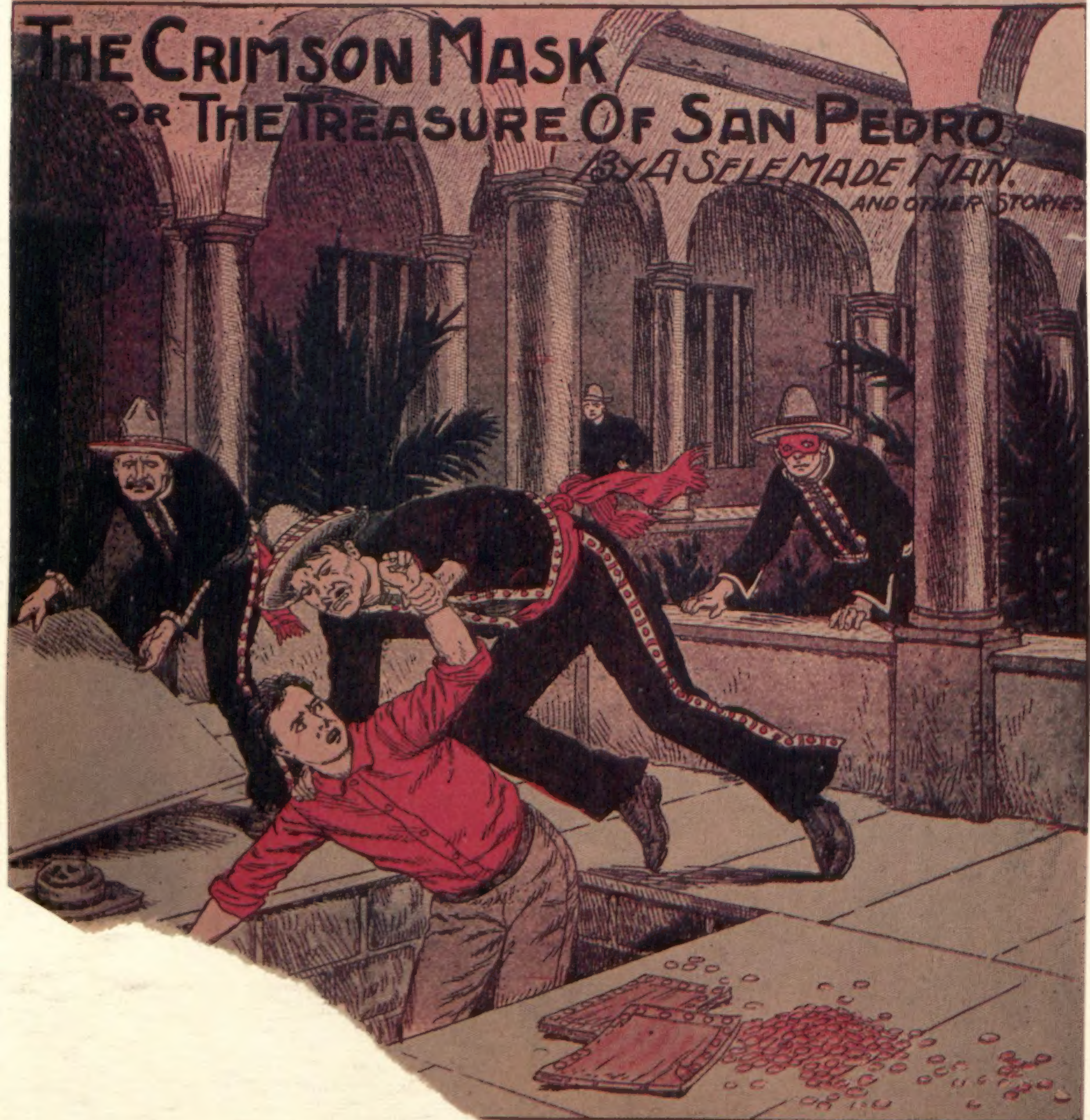
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254
JULY 16, 1920.

7 Cents

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.



vault he was seized by Pedro. "Aha! We have
Down with you among the bones of the
on mask looked on and chuckled.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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No. 772

NEW YORK, JULY 16, 1920.

Price 7 Cents

THE CRIMSON MASK

OR, THE TREASURE OF SAN PEDRO

BY A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—The Two Young Clerks.

"What are you doing, Bob?" asked Jack Redwood, looking over the top of his desk at his chum and office mate, Bob Bassett, who was also perched on a high stool at a desk facing his own.

"Nothing," replied Bob, in an abstracted tone, with his eyes glued upon a boys' magazine.

"Good boy; you're working hard at it," returned Jack.

"I'm waiting for the boss to bring out the invoice book he took away from me," said Bob, without raising his eyes.

"And in the meantime you're killing time reading that Mexican story you gave the price of a nickel for."

"Well, what of it? I notice you're not above reading one yourself once in a while," retorted Bob, turning a page and, after a glance in the direction of the open door connecting the room with the outer one where the head bookkeeper and his assistant were working, went on reading.

Jack and Bob were employed by Pickering & Co., mining agents, promoters and engineers, whose suite of very ordinary offices was situated on the second floor of a three-story building on Front street, near California, San Francisco. The Co.'s name was William Winter. He was a prospector and mining engineer, and represented the firm at the La Rosas mine, in the Sierra Madre mountain range, which divided the states of Sonora and Chihuahua, Mexico.

The mine itself was about 150 miles east of Guaymas, an important town of Sonora, on the Gulf of California. Pickering & Co. had acquired the La Rosas property, which was considered a dead issue, some months previous, and then promoted a company to take it over. Although right in the midst of many rich mines worked by their Mexican owners, it had apparently petered out. After unloading 49,000 shares of an issue of 100,000 on a credulously California public at 25 cents a share, Alonzo Pickering called a meeting of the stockholders and had himself elected president; his brother-in-law, a California street broker, secretary and treasurer, and his partner, vice-president and general manager. Then Winter, who was at the mine, was instructed to make a good bluff, and send in favorable reports of developments that were being made on the property. Pickering expected nothing from it, but he was figuring on issuing another series of shares, which he expected would go off like hotcakes, as the general silver situation in Chihuahua was bright, and was attracting favorable attention.

It was about this time that Mexican papers began to report the depredation of a gang of bandits, under the leadership of a man whose features were hidden by a crimson mask. Every now and then a convoy of rich ore, enroute to Chihuahua from the Sierra Madre, was attacked by the band and looted. Winter reported these facts, as he might mention some bit of news that did not concern him, and Pickering read his references to the bandits with a sort of languid interest, and suppressed the information lest the La Rosas stockholders, learning the facts, might ask questions which he didn't care to answer. One of Winter's letters, containing a clipping in English from a Chihuahua City daily paper, after having been consigned by Pickering to his wastebasket, came into Bob Bassett's possession, and the clipping, as well as the letter, greatly interested him. He showed it to Jack, and for some days the chums talked of little else between themselves than the Crimson Mask and his band of bandits. It was about this time that a very important and unexpected thing happened. Winter, while exploring an abandoned section of the La Rosas mine, brought to light a very rich lode of silver ore. He immediately notified his partner. Pickering was astonished, and he wouldn't believe it until he wired Winter for positive confirmation, and received it. The head of the firm at once recalled the order he had placed with the lithographers for a new issue of treasury shares, and gave the news out to all the San Francisco papers.

They printed it and the holders of the 49,000 shares of La Rosas mining stock began to pat themselves on the back for having invested in the mine. Pickering, through his brother-in-law, had no difficulty in getting the mine listed on the California Stock Exchange, and it began to be freely dealt in at fifty cents and higher. The company had money in the treasury to begin operations on a small scale at the mine, and Winter lost no time in getting the ore out. When he had collected 100 bags of it he sent it by mule convoy to Guaymas, thence by schooner up the Gulf and the Colorado River to Yuma, in Arizona, where it was put on a freight car of the Southern Pacific road and carried to San Francisco. A couple of bags were taken to the office of Pickering & Co., and put on exhibition, and the rest was sent to Selby & Co.'s smelting works.

About this time a rap came at the door of the office. Mr. Pickering had arrived and was in his office. A telegraph boy was at the door with a message for the boss. Jack took the message to

Pickering. The head of the firm tore open the envelope and read the enclosure. Then he said something that wouldn't look well in print.

"By heavens! I won't stand for this. I'll appeal to the Secretary of State. These outrages have got to be stopped!" he exclaimed aloud. "One hundred and twenty bags of ore and sixty mules stolen, and, what is worse, Mr. Smith murdered for trying to defend the property. It's intolerable! If this business is allowed to go on, we won't be able to get our output to tidewater. This mustn't get out, or the stockholders will come buzzing around my ears. Winter wants somebody sent down right away who can speak both English and Spanish, to take Smith's place. Who the dickens shall I send?"

Then Pickering saw Jack standing in the room.

"What are you waiting for?" he roared.

"I thought maybe you had an answer to——"

"No, I haven't. Get out!"

And Jack got out in double-quick time.

CHAPTER II.—Under Orders.

"The boss has got a fit," said Jack, when he got back to his desk.

"Got a fit!" cried Bob. "What do you mean?"

"The telegram gave it to him."

"Bad news?"

"I should judge so. I heard him say that 120 bags of silver ore had been stolen, the mules scattered, and Winter's chief assistant, meaning Smith, I suppose, murdered for trying to defend the ore."

"Whew!" exclaimed Bob. "That's the work of the Crimson Mask bandits, I s'pose?"

"Evidently. Pickering never worried about them before, but now that they've trodden on his pocketbook, he's mad enough to chew nails. He says he's going to appeal to the Secretary of State."

It struck Bob that perhaps he'd better go in and ask for the invoice book. He knocked on the door of the private room and was told to enter. Pickering was at his desk writing a letter to the Secretary of State.

"Well, what do you want?" he snapped, looking up.

"Are you through with the invoice book, sir?" he asked.

"Yes; take it and get out!"

"Gee! The boss is awfully mad over that telegram," thought Bob, picking up the book and starting for the door.

"Bassett!" roared Pickering.

"Yes, sir?"

"Tell Redwood to step in here."

"Yes, sir."

Bob hurried back to the little room.

"The boss wants you, Jack. Get a move on," he said.

"All right," said Jack, slipping off his stool.

"He's mad clear through. I could hear him grinding his teeth," chuckled Bob.

Jack entered the private room.

"Redwood, you talk Spanish," said Pickering abruptly.

"Yes, sir. Got something to translate?"

"No!"

The word shot out of Pickering's mouth like a stone from a catapult.

"How long will it take you to get ready to leave town?"

"Leave town, sir?" cried Jack, not a little surprised.

"For Mexico."

"Do you want me to go to the mine?"

"Where do you think I want you to go, confound you?"

"I can be ready by to-morrow, if necessary."

"See that you are. I want you to take the Southern Pacific to Yuma. You'll find some kind of a boat there that'll take you to Guaymas. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you don't find one ready to start at once, hire one. You'll be provided with the funds to see you through to Real del Monte, that's the nearest village to the mine. The La Rosas is only about five miles from it. What are you working on now?"

Jack told him.

"Turn it over to Bassett, and tell him he's got to do your work and his own till further notice. He's been having too easy a time. He'll have to earn his wages after this. Clean up things; show him what to do, and then report to Brown. He'll hand you the funds you'll need."

"All right, sir."

"You're getting \$15 a week, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your wages, until further notice, will be \$25, subject to a raise by Mr. Winter if he thinks you are worth it."

"Thank you, sir."

"You needn't thank me. I'm not a philanthropist. If I didn't think you were worth the money, I wouldn't promote you to Smith's place."

"Then Mr. Smith——"

"Was shot and killed by those infernal Crimson Mask bandits when they looted a mule train of silver ore on the way from the mine to Guaymas."

"That is too bad, sir."

"The next train that goes out will be under your charge. See that you give a good account of it."

"I suppose I had better provide myself with a good rifle and a revolver."

"Do so. Get an up-to-date Remington and have the bill sent to the office. Buy whatever you consider necessary."

"You seem to have some confidence in me?"

"I have. You're a smart boy. I've been watching you."

"Bob is smart, too, sir."

A hyena-like grin swept across Pickering's face.

"I'll make him smart before I get through with him!" he said grimly.

"Is that all, sir?"

"Yes. When you are ready to leave the office, come in."

Jack walked back to the room where Bob sat perched at work, unconscious of the change that had taken place in his chum's prospects. He waited until evening to break the news to Bob.

Bob was nearly knocked off his feet when he heard all.

Before Jack left the office he got all the particulars of train time, etc., from Mr. Pickering.

CHAPTER III.—On the Way to Mexico.

Jack and Bob talked long and earnestly together that evening. The former thought his chum acted rather strangely, as if he had something on his mind, but he put it down to the regret he believed Bob felt at parting with him. The boys were up early, and after breakfast started for the depot of the Southern Pacific road at the foot of Fourth and Townsend streets. Finally the time came when the conductor shouted "All aboard!"

"Good-by, old chap!" cried Jack, grasping Bob's hand. "You'll hear from me soon. And don't forget to write me at Real del Monte, care of La Rosas mine."

With these words he sprang on the train which was already moving slowly out of the station. We will not follow him on his trip, which took him through the populous and growing young city of Los Angeles. It is enough to say that he finally reached the small town of Yuma, on the eastern bank of the Colorado River, about on a line with the boundary of lower California, and here he left the train with his trunk and other articles and registered at a rather cheap-looking hotel. The first thing he did was to make inquiries concerning any vessel that was on the point of leaving for Guaymas. He found to his disappointment that there was nothing doing in that line for two or three days, nor was there any small craft on the water front that he could charter to take him to Mexico. There was nothing for him to do but make up his mind to remain at least three days in Yuma, which was a pretty hot town.

He went to the telegraph office and wired his arrival to Pickering, adding that it was impossible for him to leave town by water under three days.

"Where are you stopping?" asked the clerk. "In case you should get an answer to this, we want to know where to deliver it."

"I don't expect an answer; still there is no telling but some instructions might be sent to me. You'll find me at the Yuma House," replied the boy.

Jack was sitting down to supper that evening when a telegram was brought to him. Its contents rather surprised him. This is what he read:

"To Jack Redwood, Yuma, Arizona.—Bassett missing. Suspect he's followed you. Should he turn up at Yuma, send him back.

"Alonzo Pickering."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" exclaimed Jack. "I wonder if he has followed me? I remember he acted kind of peculiar the night before I left

'Frisco. He's crazy enough to do anything that he takes into his head. I must be on hand at the station in the morning when the eastbound train comes in to see if he's a passenger. My orders are to send him back, but if he won't go back I can't make him. When Bob gets a kink in his head, he's as stubborn as a mule. I know him. If he's made up his mind to go to Mexico, and gets as far as this, he'll go the rest of the way, in spite of anything I may say to the contrary. On the whole, I'd like to have his company; but if I should take him on to the mine, I'm sure to hear from Pickering about it."

Next morning Jack was at the station when the train came in, but his chum was not on it, and to say the truth Jack was rather disappointed. On the following morning he went to the train again, but there was no Bob. That afternoon he was hanging around the station talking to the agent, when a long freight train rumbled in, the engine stopping opposite the eating-house. The train crew ate an early supper there, and they came piling up from different parts of the train. The conductor came all the way from the caboose at the end of the train, and with him was a well-built lad carrying a suit-case in one hand and a rifle in a case in the other. This was Bob Bassett, who had traveled first-class as far as Los Angeles, and then by various devices succeeded in getting passage on several freights until he succeeded in reaching Yuma. Jack saw him coming down the station platform and gave a gasp.

"Upon my word, you've come at last, have you?" exclaimed Jack, running up to him. "And by a freight, at that!"

"I didn't expect to find you here, old man," said Bob, "and you can gamble on it that I'm tickled to run across you. But you talk as if you expected me. I never hinted that I had made up my mind to follow you."

"I know you didn't. But I got a telegram from Pickering. When you failed to turn up at the office, he suspected you had started to join me here, and he sent me word to fire you back."

"Fire me back?"

"Yes. Here is his dispatch. Read it for yourself," and Jack took it out of his pocket and showed it to his chum.

"What are you going to do about it?" said Bob grimly.

"Buy you a ticket for 'Frisco and put you on the train which is due here in half an hour."

"That's what you're going to do, eh?"

"Those are my instructions."

"I think I see you doing it," grinned Bob.

"You won't go back?"

"You can bet your suspenders I won't. I didn't beat my way from Los Angeles on three freights to be returned like a lot of damaged goods."

"I'm afraid you'll lose your job with the firm if you don't go back."

"Don't you worry; I'll be all right when I reach the mine. I'm solid with Winter. He'll give me something to do."

After supper at the hotel Jack showed his chum about the town and they went to bed. At six next morning they and their baggage were on board the schooner *El Capitan*, bound down the river, their destination being Guaymas.

CHAPTER IV.—A Vision of Beauty.

It took the schooner two days to reach Guaymas, the distance being over 400 miles, and the captain said they made good time, at that. At last the boys were on the soil of Mexico—the land of sun and flowers, of love and hate, of the dagger and the pistol. Jack lost no time in arranging for a conveyance to carry them to the village of Real del Monte, where Mr. Winter had his residence. They started after a light lunch along a dusty yellow road, with the Sierra de Bacatete range looming up on their right to the south. The driver told Jack that they would reach Real del Monte some time on the following afternoon. As the afternoon passed away they made good progress along the road. The boys spent the time talking and looking at the scenery of the country. Finally the sun descended behind them and it grew dark with surprising quickness, and the interval which is called dusk lasting only a short time. By this time the boys were very hungry, and they eagerly looked toward the inn they were to put up at.

"How much farther to Bonancita?" Jack asked the driver.

"Not far; maybe twelve miles," he replied, whipping up the team.

Two hours later they entered the village and came to a stop before the inn, which stood beside the road on the outskirts. The boys carried their light baggage into the inn, and were welcomed by the landlord with profuse hospitality. They were shown to a room on the second floor, and there they deposited their grips and rifles, but their revolvers were strapped around their waists, and they did not remove them. A very good meal, on the Mexican plan, was served to them at a table on the porch by a pretty senorita, with the darkest of eyes, who quite fascinated Bob. She chatted briskly with Jack, who complimented her on her good looks and charming ways, and altogether made himself quite solid with her.

Next morning they resumed their journey and about noon reached Rio Chico, a small village fifteen miles west of their destination. This hamlet nestled at the foot of a small independent mountain range, and was a somewhat picturesque spot. The inn before which the vehicle drew up was no great shakes, but the landlord seemed very glad to see them just the same. The prospect of good entertainment there appeared to be very dubious.

"Is this the only inn here?" Jack asked Bruno.

"The only one, senor. You will be well treated. But it is early for dinner, so if you give your order, and have a little patience, you will have no fault to find."

"What can you give us to eat, landlord?" asked Jack.

"A nice fat pullet, senor," he said, and then went on to mention other things that made the prospect of a good meal more encouraging than the look of the house indicated.

"All right. Do your best, landlord. How long will it take you to get dinner?"

An hour at least, he was informed, but in the meanwhile the senors, suggested the landlord, could amuse themselves around the village, or

they could go up and look at the waterfall in the glen.

"We'll look at the waterfall. Where is the glen?"

The landlord pointed out the direction. They must follow the defile which was just beyond the village, and after a short walk they would come upon the waterfall. It was not much of a waterfall, the landlord admitted, but all things considered, it was worth visiting in preference to hanging around the inn.

"Come on, Bob," said Jack.

"Where are you going, old man?" asked his chum.

"To see the sights of the neighborhood. Dinner won't be ready for an hour or longer, and we've got to kill time somehow."

"Is it safe to leave our guns in the vehicle?" asked Bob.

"I guess so. The driver is taking his rig into the yard, so nothing is likely to be disturbed," replied Jack.

A circuitous tramp over boulders and through brush brought them at length to the glen, and there the waterfall burst on their view. It was very pretty so far as it went, and with the glen would have been hailed with delight by a kodak fiend, or even a less enthusiastic amateur photographer.

"It isn't so bad," said Jack, as they took in the view.

Then he uttered an exclamation and pointed to a spot of velvet turf a short distance away. Lying asleep in a negligent attitude was the loveliest girl Jack had ever dreamed of. Her face was exquisitely chiseled in the purest Spanish type, and it was easy to see that she came from fine stock. Her figure was rounded in the most artistic proportions, and altogether she was a dream of female beauty. Her mantilla of expensive black lace had partly slipped over her head and exposed a head of hair that doubtless was the envy of her sex. Her head rested on one of her arms, and her lips were slightly parted, showing the pearly teeth behind.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Bob; "she's a beaut!"

Jack softly approached her to get a closer view, and Bob was following when he saw his chum stop suddenly, stare at the ground near the senorita's extended arm, and then, to his amazement, slip his hand to his hip and draw his revolver.

"What in thunder——" began Bob, but Jack raised his hand as a warning for him to be silent.

Bob stopped and gazed at Jack with all eyes. Slowly Jack raised his revolver and took aim at something he saw in the grass. It was a peculiar-looking snake, coiled on its tail, as if about to spring on the sleeper. In another moment Jack pulled the trigger. There was a flash, a whip-like report, and the girl sprang to her feet with a thrilling scream and looked at the boy with frightened eyes.

CHAPTER V.—Mercedes and Her Father.

"Don't be afraid, senorita," said Jack, raising his hat with his left hand, while he held his revolver in his right. "The danger is over."

"Danger!" she exclaimed in liquid tones of the purest Castilian. "What mean you, senor? Why did you shoot?"

Jack pointed at the twisting and writhing reptile, its head shattered by the bullet from his revolver.

"Madre de Dios!" exclaimed the girl, gazing at the snake with eyes of horror. "It is one of the dama blanca species—the most deadly kind in the country. Its bite is fatal."

"I saw it as it was coiled and about to spring at your extended arm. I did not know how deadly it was, but all snakes are alike to me—dangerous!"

"Senor, you have saved my life!" she cried impulsively, seizing his hand, revolver and all, and carrying it to her ruby lips. "Heaven knows how grateful I am to you. I thank you with all my heart."

"You are welcome, senorita. It is a pleasure to me to have rendered you a service," replied Jack, his heart beating like a triphammer under glances of her glorious eyes, which he now saw for the first time.

"Tell me your name, senor, that I may remember it in my prayers, when next I go to mass," she said.

"Jack Redwood."

"Jack Redwood," she repeated. "You are an American?"

"Yes, senorita."

"Yet you speak Spanish perfectly."

Jack bowed.

"May I ask your name, senorita?" he said.

"Mercedes Castilano."

"You are Spanish?"

"Si, senor."

"And you live in this neighborhood?"

"Si, senor," she said, in a low tone, a rich flush flying in her face as she cast down her eyes.

"I should be glad to see you to your hacienda, senorita, if you care for my company."

"No, no, no!" she cried with sudden energy, which rather surprised Jack. "I—I—you—pardon me, it is impossible."

"Very well, senorita; I have no wish to intrude on your company. I merely thought—you understand me," said Jack, clearly disappointed.

The girl saw the look on his face.

"Senor," she said, laying her hands on her breast, "do not feel provoked with me. I cannot explain why it is impossible that you can accompany me. I must first tell father. But you are a stranger. Perhaps I may never see you again. Are you going to the silver mines in the Sierra Madre, or perhaps you are returning to Guaymas?"

"I am going to the La Rosas mine, five miles or so beyond the village of Real del Monte, which I understand is fifteen miles from the village yonder, where we have stopped to dine. I have been sent from San Francisco to take the place of the man who a few days ago was murdered by the Crimson Mask and——"

He was interrupted by a sudden cry from the girl as she drew back and put her hands to her face.

"What is the matter, senorita? Does the name of the Crimson Mask frighten you?"

She did not reply, but seemed all of a-tremble.

"Pardon me, senorita, for distressing you. I would not have mentioned the name, had I suspected——"

"Suspected! What mean you, senor? You cannot suspect that—no, no, it is impossible!" she cried feverishly.

Her manner was so strange and excited that Jack did not know what to think.

"I was about to say that I would not have mentioned the bandit's name had I thought it would have distressed you."

"Ah, yes, yes; I see. Forgive me. You must think me a very strange creature, but if you knew my position. Ah, senor, you are good, and brave, and so handsome! How happy would I be if I were permitted the pleasure of having you for a friend. But I have none—none but my father."

Her voice ended in a dry sob, she dropped her face in her hands. Jack sympathies went out to her, even as his heart had already gone.

"It cannot be that one so lovely as yourself has cause to be unhappy, senorita," he said.

"Unhappy! Madre de Dios! If you knew! But let us talk about something else," she added hurriedly. "You say you are going to La Rosas mine to take the place of a man who—is dead?"

"Yes, senorita. It will be my business to accompany the mule train of silver ore each time it goes to Guaymas."

"No, no, senor, you must not," she cried, seizing him by the hands with feverish earnestness. "Anything else, but not that."

"Why what do you mean?" cried the astonished boy.

"It is dangerous—dangerous! You have saved my life. I am grateful. I cannot bear that you should run the certain risk of losing yours."

"It is my duty, senorita, and a true American never shirks that, be the peril what it may."

"But you do not know what you would have to face."

"You mean the Crimson Ma——"

She clapped one of her hands on his lips.

"You would face death."

"Well, senorita, a fellow can't die but once, and I intend to carry out my orders. If those bandits interfere with my mule train there'll be something doing that'll open their eyes. As for the leader of that gang—well, you saw what I did to that snake. I have an American Remington that's warranted to kill at 1,000 yards or further, and I can shoot some. I'll know him by his mask, and if I ever get a fair crack at him he won't lead any more ruffians on mule trains, of silver ore," said Jack in a determined tone.

The girl seemed overwhelmed by the boy's words.

"You would shoot—him?" she cried, almost hysterically.

"Why not? Isn't he the terror of the mine owners of the Sierra Madre? Didn't he, or one of his ruffians, kill the man whose place I have been sent to fill? Well, my instructions are to carry the ore trains through to Guaymas, and I'm going to do it—if I live."

"Brave young senor! Spoken like a brave Americano. I wish you success!" cried a hearty voice in Spanish, as a fine-looking man of forty stepped out of the bushes and faced Jack.

The senorita uttered a smothered exclamation,

and drew away from the boy. Jack was much impressed by the newcomer. He looked like one of nature's noblemen. His snappy black eyes flashed like one born to command. His manner at that moment seemed exceedingly gracious, but Jack felt he could be stern and authoritative when he chose.

"Thank you for the compliment, senor," replied Jack. "I meant what I said."

"You look as if you did," said the newcomer, with a kind of military directness. "So you have come to Mexico to exterminate the Crimson Mask and his band, eh?"

There was a slight tinge of sarcasm in his voice.

"Not at all. If the bandits leave me alone I certainly shall not bother with them," said Jack. "It is the business of the Mexican government to take care of them."

"Which they have failed to do, and always will."

"Why do you say that, senor? Do you not sympathize with your own government?"

"My government! I am a Spaniard," drawing himself up proudly, "and I owe no fealty to Mexico."

"Still, while you live in the country it is to your interest to—"

"We will not discuss that. Let us return to the subject you spoke about. What are your plans for carrying your silver trains to Guaymas so as to avoid the Crimson Mask and his followers?"

As he asked the question the senorita made a step forward as though to interfere, but the newcomer, though not looking at her, seemed to perceive her purpose and made a slight gesture which to Jack appeared to have no reference to her, but which she evidently understood, for she stopped and cast down her eyes.

"I have no plans as yet," replied Jack. "I am a stranger in the country, and have not yet reported to my superior. I shall act under his orders and do the best I can."

"Very good, senor. I think I heard you say you have a Remington rifle, and that you are an expert shot."

"You heard right, senor."

"Can you hit a man at 1,000 yards?"

"Hardly, except by accident."

"At 500, then?"

"It would be a chance unless the man stood still and invited the shot."

"But suppose you got an excellent chance at the Crimson Mask at fifty yards or even feet, he would have no show of escaping you, eh?"

"I wouldn't give much for his life."

"Excellent!" laughed the Spaniard. "Perhaps the chance will be yours soon; but beware lest he gets the drop on you first. I have heard he can shoot some himself. I have myself taken lessons of his instructors. Let me show you what I can do."

The Spaniard took a five-spot of clubs from his pocket and pinned it to a tree with a small jewel dagger. Then he stepped off thirty paces, turned and fired four times in quick succession. To Jack's astonishment he put a bullet into each of the four corner spots.

"That's fine shooting, senor," said the boy. "I

have never seen it beaten, or, for that matter equalled. I take my hat off to you."

A sarcastic smile stole over the Spaniard's face. "You have a revolver, young senor, perhaps you'll let me see what you can do."

"Not after your exhibition."

"I thought I heard a revolver shot from this place a while ago."

"You did. I fired it."

"At what, pray?"

"At that snake," said Jack, pointing.

"You took its head off, I perceive. An excellent shot even at close range. It is a dama blanca, the most venomous reptile of Mexico. You did well to kill it for had it struck you, a third person would have been needed to guard the ore trains of La Rosas mine on their way to Guaymas, which would be a great pity."

Again the sarcastic inflection in his tones.

"It was not within striking distance of me, but of the senorita."

"What!" exclaimed the Spaniard, his manner suddenly changing. "Is that true, Mercedes?"

"Si mia padre (Yes, my father). He saved my life."

"Senor, you have placed me under the deepest of obligations to you," said the Spaniard, seizing Jack by the hand. "I assure you I shall not forget it. My child, my Mercedes, is the apple of my eye. In saving her life you have put your—but no matter. We shall meet again, I trust, young senor. You will honor my hacienda with your presence at an early date, I hope."

"I will endeavor to do so if you will tell me where it is."

"I will send a carriage to fetch you in a week, perhaps, when you have got settled at the mine. Till then I wish you adios (farewell)."

"Adios, senor," said Jack, acknowledging the Spaniard's courtly bow by lifting his hat in American style.

"Bid the senor goodbye, Mercedes, and follow me," said her father, stepping into the bushes after regaining his jeweled dagger.

The girl was all sunshine now.

"Senor Jack, I shall not forget what I owe you," she said, stepping up to him and offering her shapely hand. "We shall meet again soon."

"I hope so, senorita, for it will be a great pleasure for me to do so," said the plucky young American.

"Ah, senor Jack, you do not know what a load is off my mind. I no longer fear you will encounter danger that you cannot protect yourself against."

She flashed him one bewitching look and springing into the bushes was gone, and with her going Jack felt that the day had lost some of its brightness.

CHAPTER VI.—At Their Journey's End.

Bob had remained in the background during the whole of the interview Jack had had with Mercedes and her father. He now came forward.

"Bless me, Bob, I forgot all about you," said Jack.

"I don't wonder with such a pretty girl to talk

to. Who was the gent who came out of the bushes and d.d the crack shooting?"

"The young lady's father."

"You don't say. He's a fine-looking man all right."

"Yes. He's a Spaniard, not a Mexican. He has invited me to call at his hacienda. Going to send a rig for me after I get settled at the mine."

"You're in luck. I'll have to pick up the Spanish lingo if I remain in this country, otherwise I might as well be on an uninhabited island."

While talking the boys were retracing their steps back through the defile. They now came in sight of the village. They had been away from the inn considerably more than an hour, and they calculated that dinner was ready by this time. And they were fully ready for their dinner. When they reached the inn they found a table set for them under the shade of a spreading tree, and they sat down and were immediately served by the landlord himself. They ate the meal leisurely, and during it Jack told his chum a part of what had passed between Mercedes and himself, and all that her father said, so far as he could remember. Before the boys had finished, Bruno brought the rig out of the yard and appeared to be ready to proceed on the last lap of the journey. The ride to Real del Monte was accomplished inside of two hours, and the boys were set down at the door of Mr. Winter's residence. The general manager was at the mines, but they were welcomed by Mrs. Winter and her pretty daughter. Jack was expected, but not Bob.

Mrs. Winter, however, supposed that her husband had not been advised of the coming of the latter, and made him as welcome as Jack. After a short conversation, Jack explained that his chum, not relishing the idea of parting from him, had followed him to Yuma on his own responsibility, and he had brought him the rest of the way, hoping that Mr. Winter would find something for him to do at the mine. Mrs. Winter replied that their countrymen were so few in that locality that her husband would be very glad to have Bob with him at the mine, though he had come to that neighborhood without authority. The house, while only one story, was quite a good-sized residence, being built about an open space, or garden, something after the style of a hacienda.

This open space, which of course had no roof, was called a patio, and was shaded by tall pecan trees, underneath which were set rustic seats. The outside of the cottage was whitewashed, being built of stone, and the windows were shaded with bright green blinds. Mrs. Winter seemed quite contented there, but whether her daughter was or not did not appear till the boys came to know her better. At any rate one thing was clear, Miss Clara Winter was delighted to have two good-looking American boys to converse with. She had already made some progress in the Spanish language, as she found that necessary in a part of Mexico where very little English was spoken, and when she mentioned the fact Jack thought he'd see how she was getting on in it. She readily understood what he said, and replied fairly well, but she soon broke off, saying she much preferred to use her native tongue. Jack laughed

and after that the conversation continued in English.

Clara and the two boys were getting on swimmingly together when Mr. Winter returned from the mine. He welcomed Jack heartily, but was manifestly surprised to see Bob. Jack explained why his chum was there, and said he hoped that Mr. Winter would not be put out by his coming, but find a job for him at the mine, since he and Bob were such warm friends and companions that they really wished to be together. The general manager laughed and said that would be all right.

"I know Bob, and always liked him in 'Frisco, so, on the whole, I am rather pleased to have him here," he said. "I'll make it all right with Pickering, and will manage to find something for our young friend to do."

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," said Bob. "It was rather cheeky of me to follow Jack, and try to force myself on your consideration, but I couldn't help it."

"The fact is, Bob wanted to help run down the Crimson Mask bandits," laughed Jack.

At the mention of the rascals the manager's face clouded.

"The scoundrels!" he exclaimed. "They murdered poor Smith. You will have to look out for yourself, my lad, for the duty of conveying the ore to Guaymas will devolve on you."

"Can't I go with Jack? We've provided ourselves with first-class magazine rifles on purpose to protect the train," said Bob.

"I should hardly like to expose both of you to the same peril," replied Mr. Winter.

"What's the difference, sir?" said Bob. "I'm here on my own responsibility, and if anything happens to me it is not up to you."

"That's a poor argument. Still I'll consider the matter, for it might be safer for both if two went than one."

"That's the way we've been figuring it, sir," said Jack.

He then told Mr. Winter about his meeting with Senorita Castilano and her father in the mountain glen near the village of Rio Chico, where they stopped that day for dinner. The manager was quite interested.

"He is called Don Castilano in his neighborhood, and is said to be a hidalgo of rank in Spain, but banished from the country for some political offense. I know very little about him, having met him only once, and that was the other day just before I sent out that ill-starred convoy in the defence of which against the bandits Smith met his death," he said. "He seemed to be much interested in the fact that I was shipping silver ore to the States, and asked me how the train was protected. As the bandits had not been seen on this side of the Sierra Madre, because, I suppose, all the other mine owners, who are Mexicans, send their ore east to Chihuahua, I did not look for the rascals to bother with our small output. I therefore told him that I did not think the train would require any special protection. That Mr. Smith and the peons would take care of it."

"How did the peons behave when attacked by the bandits?" asked Jack.

"Very badly. I understand. It was wholly

through their cowardice that Smith lost his life. Had they put up a good front the rascals might have been beaten off, for Smith was a fighter."

"I suppose you have notified the authorities of this State about the attack."

"Yes, but we Americans do not get a whole lot of sympathy from the Mexicans. I was told that a detachment of soldiers would be sent from the Guaymas garrison, but they haven't showed up as yet."

"Mr. Pickering was awfully mad when he got your telegram concerning the outrage. He said he was going to appeal to the Secretary of State."

"That will simply mean a lot of red tape and nothing done. We have got to protect ourselves."

"Bob and I will do our share, sir."

Jack told Mr. Winter that Don Castilano had invited him to his hacienda, and would send a rig for him in a week or so.

"Well, you can go, of course, for you seem to be the only person in this vicinity whom the Don has taken friendly notice of. I suppose that is because you saved his daughter from the bite of the dama blanca, which would have killed her according to the reptile's reputation. They say that no one bitten by that snake has ever survived."

"Then I hope I do not run across any more of the species," said Jack.

"I trust you won't, as it probably would cut short your usefulness quicker than the bandits."

At this point the evening meal was announced and all hands adjourned to the dining-room. The evening was spent by the boys in strolling around the village with Clara. On their return they were shown to a large airy chamber, looking out on the back garden.

"When you get up in the morning I advise you lads to shake out your clothes and your shoes before putting them on," said Mr. Winter.

"Why so?" asked Bob.

"To get rid of any stray centipedes that might fancy to lodge in them during the night."

"Gosh! Are those things so plentiful as that?"

"There are quite a few around, and their bite is unpleasant. They sting with their tail. We are accustomed to them, and they don't bother us much. Sometimes I step on half a dozen in a day, at other times I don't notice one for several days."

"Why don't they stop out of doors where they belong?" growled Bob.

"It's hard to say why they don't," laughed the manager; "but I guess they think they own the country and all that is in it. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, sir," said Jack, and soon afterwards the boys turned in.

CHAPTER VII.—The Brotherhood of San Pedro.

Bob was very careful to look the floor over before he turned out of bed next morning, for he had no mind to place his bare feet on a centipede. Then he shook his clothes out carefully one by one and put them on. Finally he did the same to his shoes. No centipede rewarded his efforts, and he was not sorry. Jack followed the same tactics, but not so carefully, and the boys presented themselves in the patio. Finding no one up, or at least around, but the servants, they walked out

front. A light breeze was stirring, and though warm the morning was unusually charming. They strolled around a portion of the village, flirted with two or three pretty señoritas engaged in their morning avocations, and then returned to the house to find the family in the patio, and breakfast ready to be served. Soon after the meal the peon servants brought out three saddle horses.

"I suppose you boys can ride some," said Mr. Winter. "At any rate you can't very well fall off these Mexican saddles, and you will soon get accustomed to riding."

"I can ride," replied Jack, "and I believe Bob can, too, though I never saw him on a horse."

"The only thing I can ride is a hobby," grinned Bob.

"As your hobby at present is the annihilation of bandits, a la Bertram, you'll find it necessary to acquire horsemanship," laughed Jack.

Bob was helped into the saddle, where he felt strange and looked foolish. Jack needed no help, and the party set off at an easy pace to accommodate Bob. Bassett clung on to the pommel with the tenacity of a drowning man to the proverbial straw, and the motion of his animal bounced him up and down. Jack and Mr. Winter accommodated their bodies to the movements of the animals, thereby dispensing with the jolting that Bob received, and which subsequently made sitting down as uncomfortable as if he had received corporeal punishment in the old-fashioned style. In due time they covered the five miles between the village and the mine, and Bob, with many grimaces, dismounted with his companions. They were introduced to several Mexican employees, and then taken into the mine, through a series of long galleries on a level with the entrance.

There was no shaft extending downward as in most American mines, where the ore is hoisted to the surface in steel buckets by machinery. The main tunnel went straight into the mountain, like a railroad one, and from it branched off smaller tunnels and galleries, on either side, all connecting one with the other. Where the ore had been dug out by previous owners were rugged chambers of different sizes, according as the ore lode spread. Some of these were of such a solid character that the roof and sides required no shoring timbers. As modern drills had not been used the amount of labor to get out the ore must have been tremendous—but then labor is cheap in Mexico, and where it is paid for out of the product of the mine itself the owners regarded it lightly so long as results are satisfactory. At the time of our story, however, American hand and steam drills were being used in all the mines of the country, and naturally more progress was made and a far larger output secured. The boys were greatly interested in the La Rosas mine, and particularly that section of it where the work was going on. Mr. Winter understood his business thoroughly, and he was using up-to-date methods as far as he was able to command them. As soon as he had thoroughly tested the lode he discovered, and found it as stable as it seemed to promise, he intended to introduce the steam drill. At present matters were, to a certain extent, in the experimental stage.

"In a few days I shall have 150 bags of ore ready for shipment," said the manager, "and I shall send it without delay to Guaymas. I might even go along with you boys to make sure that it gets in safety to the Gulf."

"You have no idea what became of the bandits after looting the last train?" said Jack.

"One of the peons who ran away at the time of the attack told me that they disappeared with the mules in the direction of the range of Rio Chico," replied Winter. "I do not imagine that they are hiding there, though. It is probable that they skirted the mountains and then made for the Sierra Madre, in the fastnesses of which it is suspected they have their rendezvous. From all accounts they seem to have stolen more than 1,000 bags of silver ore, some of it of especial richness. Our mine would seem to be the least productive for them when there are so many richer ones in the neighborhood."

The manager did not assign the boys to any branch of work that day, and around noon he told them they could ride back to the house and rest themselves. They were glad to take advantage of his permission, and off they set for the village. During the ride, Jack gave Bob some instructions in horseback riding, and they reached the house in time for the light midday meal. Later on Clara had her pony saddled and proposed that the boys accompany her on a trip around the country. Jack had no objections, but Bob had. However, he wouldn't stay behind, for he had no way of amusing himself, so he accompanied the others. He felt like a wreck when they got back several hours later.

"Holy smoke! But I'm sore," he said to Jack, as he deposited himself on a settee in the patio in such a gingerly way as to provoke a loud chuckle from his chum.

"What are you laughing at?" said Bob.

"You. One would think you had suddenly become brittle from the way you sit down," replied Jack.

"Well, if you felt as I do you'd want a cushion."

"I guess I can get you one, but it will give you away."

"Don't disturb yourself. I can stand it."

"When you start for the mine in the morning you'll think you're riding a red-hot stove," grinned Jack.

"If I don't feel any better than I do now I won't go to the mine."

"You'll do as you are told, I guess. You're under salary and have got to earn it. Aren't you sure you didn't stay in 'Frisco?"

"No, I ain't."

"You'll miss your stories down here."

"I can get along without them."

"Maybe you expect to turn out the hero of adventures with the bandits that will knock what you've read silly."

"Stop your joshing. Here comes Miss Clara."

"Then look pleasant or she'll think you're a green-eyed chap."

"Now that you boys are here I may get a chance to visit the old church and monastery of San Pedro," said Miss Winter.

"The old church of San Pedro! Where is that?" asked Jack.

"Near the village of San Pedro, about twenty

miles from here. It adjoins an ancient monastery built, and for a very long time occupied, by a religious order called the Brotherhood of San Pedro. The order is out of existence, but the monastery remains, a venerable ruin except the quarters of the priests who officiate at the church. The village, church and monastery stand in a wild and romantic part of the mountain range, and are well worth a visit."

"You can count on us, Miss Clara. Nothing would suit Bob better than to ride over there and back to-morrow. That would be just forty miles, and would use up a day nicely at a smart gait," and Jack gave his chum a sly look.

Bob felt like punching him.

"Although we've been here several months I never could get my father to take me there, and I'm just dying to go. Do you know there's a strange legend about that church?"

"Is there?" said Jack.

"Yes. They say that during the time the Brotherhood lived at the monastery they accumulated a large store of pure silver which they melted into ingots and hid in the vaults of the church."

"They found and worked a mine, I suppose, in the mountains."

"I did not hear that they had anything to do with a mine. It is said that in their time all the ornaments of the church were of pure silver, and that all the plates and vessels used by them in the monastery were of silver, too."

"What became of those articles when the Brotherhood went out of existence?"

"No one knows. They disappeared."

"Were the church vaults searched for the alleged treasure?"

"Yes, but it was never found."

"Then I guess the legend doesn't amount to much."

"I don't know. The people of the village round about all believe that the silver treasure is really hidden in the church."

"Why don't they keep on searching for it, then?"

"They wouldn't dare penetrate those vaults. They would regard it as a sacrilege, for the bones of most of the Brotherhood are buried there."

"Then who was it that searched unsuccessfully for the silver?"

"The State authorities did on two or three occasions."

"When they need money, I suppose. If I thought there was anything in the yarn I'd go and hunt for it myself on the quiet, with Bob, if he'd join me."

"I'm afraid you wouldn't have much chance. The priests are in charge of the old church, and if they caught you in it, except as a worshipper, they'd make a time about it."

And if we were lucky enough to find the treasure they'd stop us from taking it away, eh?"

"Indeed they would. The whole village of San Pedro would turn out to help them."

"If we visit the church, as you propose, will we be permitted to inspect the vaults?"

"Oh, dear, I wouldn't go down into those musty cellars for the world," said the girl, with a little shudder. "Why they are nothing but a kind of

underground cemetery. There must be more than 200 of the Brotherhood moldering away there."

"They must be buried one on top of the other; but I don't suppose the coffins are in sight. I'm not afraid of dead men. They're not dangerous at all. It is live rascals, like the Crimson Mask band, who are to be avoided."

"I've heard people talk that way before," laughed the girl, "and discovered they were afraid to pass a lonesome churchyard at night."

"Well, Miss Clara, if you fear that the spirits of the moldy Brotherhood would get away with me you had better not dare to venture into those vaults. If I believed there was a treasure there nothing would stop me from trying to get at it. To prove to you that I'm not a coward, I'll make a trip to that old church some night and bring away a coffin plate if I can find one, or a piece of a broken coffin."

"You wouldn't do any such thing," said Clara, incredulously.

"Do you dare me to do it some time?"

"I'm afraid you'd never come back."

The entrance of Mr. Winter put a stop to the talk about the church of San Pedro, and soon afterward dinner was announced.

CHAPTER VIII.—Crimson Mask and His Band.

A week passed away, during which Jack and Bob got well acquainted with the mine as well as the village of Real del Monte. Then Mr. Winter announced that on the following day 160 bags of silver ore would be shipped to San Francisco, via Guaymas. They were to go in two lots of eighty bags each, on the backs of forty mules, and Jack was to be in charge of the convoy, with Bob as his second in command. Jack received full instructions as to the delivery of the ore in Guaymas, and after he had made the first trip he was to bring the mules back at once and start out on the second.

A force of fifteen peons, armed with Mexican muskets, was to accompany the boys, to look after the mules and to protect the ore in case of a bandit attack. Jack and Bob would carry their rifles, so that the convoy, as far as appearances went, at any rate, was quite a formidable one. The convoy that went out under Smith, and was looted, consisted of sixty mules with 120 bags of ore and fifteen peons. Only four of the peons carried muskets, while Smith had only a pair of Colt's revolvers. They were attacked about dark midway between Rio Chico and another small village to the west.

"From the most reliable accounts the bandit band does not number much over a dozen men," said the general manager to Jack. "With the force and the arms you have at your command you ought to foil any attack that might be made on the train. It is my opinion you will not be molested, for the bandits are probably informed of the strength of the convoy."

"What makes you think they are wise to our arrangements?" asked Jack.

"I suspect they have spies at all the mines. Peons, for instance, whom they have won over to their interests."

"It wouldn't be good for the traitor that I found in our ranks," said Jack, in a determined tone. "I think I'd hang him to the nearest tree as an example."

"I wouldn't blame you if you did. A traitor is entitled to no consideration, and a firm hand is the best thing under perilous circumstances."

It was decided to start from the mine as early as possible and get beyond the danger zone during daylight. Accordingly, after an early breakfast Mr. Winter, Jack and Bob rode out to the mine, where they found the mules and the peons already assembled. The bags were quickly bound on the mules, and the start made at once. At Real del Monte four mules laden with provisions were taken on, and then the convoy continued on the road to Rio Chico. When within a mile of that hamlet a single horseman was declared approaching from the mountains. He proved to be a Mexican of sinister aspect, and was armed with a rifle and a pair of revolvers. He asked for Senor Jack Redwood.

"That's my name," said Jack, who, with Bob, was riding at the head of the line. Then, senor, this note is for you."

Handing it to the boy, he wheeled his horse and started off.

"Hold on," shouted Jack. "Come back here."

But the horseman paid not the slightest attention to his words. Nothing but a rifle shot would have stopped him, and Jack did not feel that he could proceed to such an extreme as that, though he strongly suspected that the messenger came from the Crimson Mask. Such proved to be the case when he opened the note and read the following:

"Senor Redwood—I am fully acquainted with everything connected with your convoy—its apparent strength and its actual weakness. Look to the muskets of your men, as well as to the rifles of yourself and companion, and you will understand how completely you are at my mercy if I chose to attack you. But be not afraid. A more potent power protects you than powder and ball. What that power is I may not say. It is enough for you to know that you are safe. Go your way in peace. I accord you the right of way. Not only now, but at all times.

"Crimson Mask."

Jack was fairly staggered by the contents of the note. With a feeling of uneasiness he cocked his rifle and pulled the trigger. There was a snap and nothing more. He threw out the cartridge and examined it. It had been tampered with and was useless. Every other cartridge in the magazine was in the same condition. Bob looked on until he comprehended the situation and then found all the cartridges in his own weapon to be out of commission.

"Who in thunder has done this?" he exclaimed.

"We have one or more enemies in our ranks, that is clear," replied Jack.

He pulled out his revolver and found the same condition there. He took a musket from the nearest peon and examined the cartridge in it. It couldn't be fired in a thousand years. The Crimson Mask had spoken the truth—the convoy was powerless to resist an attack. Jack took a long

breath and his eyes instinctively wandered in the direction taken by the messenger. Across the valley were approaching at full gallop a body of men.

"Geel! I see our finish," said Bob. "We'll have to give up the mules, for here come the bandits as certain as eggs are eggs."

Jack bit his lips. There was absolutely nothing to do. They could not resist with clubbed guns, for the rascals would simply hold a short distance aloof and pick them off at their ease if he refused to surrender. The horsemen rode up to within a hundred yards and then stopped. At their head was a stalwart figure across whose eyes was drawn a crimson mask. The band consisted of sixteen men, and the majority were hard-looking chaps, who would not have disgraced a pirate ship. The Crimson Mask made a gesture and they spread themselves out. Another gesture and fifteen rifles were raised, pointed heavenward and discharged.

The Crimson Mask then removed his sombrero and made a bow toward Jack. Swinging his horse he darted off the way he came, and his band followed in his tracks. The convoy had instinctively come to a halt, and every man, as well as the two boys, had watched the movements of the bandit band with beating hearts. They watched them depart and gradually disappear in the distance with feelings it would be hard to describe.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" cried Bob. "If this doesn't beat the Dutch then I don't know what I'm talking about."

Jack said nothing, but started his horse on, and the convoy behind him got in motion again and proceeded on its way.

"Say, what do you s'pose this means?" asked Bob.

"Read the letter from the Crimson Mask. The facts seem to be exactly as set forth in it. We are helpless yet are promised safety and the right of way. It is not according to bandit procedure to let a sure thing get away, and yet such seems to be the case in this instance. It is a great mystery to me. As much so as is the real identity of the Crimson Mask himself," said Jack.

Bob read the letter. He certainly has us down fine," he said. "What does he mean by saying that a more potent power protects us than powder and ball?"

"How can I tell you? I'm not a mind reader."

"It's mighty queer. Maybe we have some kind of a mascot with us, like a rabbit's foot, that he's afraid of? The Mexicans are very superstitious, you know."

"No; I don't believe it's anything like that. It would take something stronger than a charm to hold off a bunch of bandits from an easy snap."

"Then I give it up," said Bob, handing the letter back.

In a short time the convoy reached Rio Chico and found up before the inn. Jack bought wine for the men, and non-alcoholic drink for himself and Bob. The village was named after a small river on which the bandit stood. It was crossed by a wooden bridge, and over this the train presently took its way. About an hour later they reached another village and stopped for more drink and a brief rest. Eight miles further on they crossed

the Rio Yaqui, by fording, and camped on the other side for dinner.

After an hour's rest they proceeded to San Jose, and thence to Bonancita, twenty miles further, where they put up for the night at the inn. The pretty senorita seemed delighted to see Jack and Bob again, and hung around the table when she served them with supper, talking glibly with the former and making googoo eyes at the latter. In the morning the convoy resumed its journey. The second night was passed in a small village on the Matape River, and they reached Guaymas after dark on the third day. Jack turned the bags of ore over to Mr. Winter's agent, and next morning his party started on their return journey to Real del Monte, where they duly arrived.

CHAPTER IX.—The Ride to San Pedro.

Mr. Winter had already been informed by a note from Jack, sent by a messenger from Rio Chico, of their meeting with the Crimson Mask, but beyond intimating that they had not been molested, he inclosed no particulars. When the mule train returned to Real del Monte the first thing the general manager did was to congratulate Jack on having carried the convoy through in safety and with dispatch.

"I got your note," he said, "saying that you met the bandits and were not interfered with. I guess the Crimson Mask was shy of attacking you when he saw you were well prepared to receive him."

"That's where you're wrong, Mr. Winter. We were in worse shape than Mr. Smith was to stand them off," replied Jack.

"Why, what do you mean?" said the manager, in surprise. "A dozen of the peons carried muskets, while you boys had your rifles, and a revolver apiece."

"Yes, I know it, but they were of no more use to us than wooden dummies."

"I don't understand you."

"Every cartridge we had had been tampered with. Not one could be fired."

"What!" gasped Mr. Winter.

"See for yourself. There are the cartridges I took out of the magazine of my rifle. They are centerfire ones. The fulminating caps have been removed."

We will state here that this could not have happened with the present style of cartridge in use to-day; but the events described in this story took place years ago.

"How in thunder did this happen?" asked Mr. Winter.

"That's what I would like to know. We have traitors in camp, and the damage was done before we set out."

"But how could any emissary of the bandits have got hold of your rifle and Bob's? You kept them in your room."

"Somebody must have got in there during the night, while we were asleep. This was not a difficult matter with the windows open."

"Well, this is serious and must be investigated."

"I don't think it will happen again if there is

any faith to be put in the word of the Crimson Mask, whose actions towards us, I must say, were very extraordinary."

"What do you mean?"

"Prior to the appearance of the rascals a single horseman rode up to the head of the train, asked for me, and after handing me a note, retreated the way he came. Here is the note. Read it and see what you can make out of it. It is Greek to me."

Mr. Winter read the note.

"Most extraordinary," he said.

"It certainly is. The actions of the band were in perfect keeping with it," and Jack described the approach of the bandits, their salute and their retreat.

"I'm bound to say that the conduct of the Crimson Mask and his followers is past my comprehension. If he holds to his word we shall have no further trouble in sending our ore to Guaymas; but I suspect there is some ruse behind it. I shall continue to take the same precautions, and we will make sure before you start again in the morning that all your weapons are in working order."

Nothing else was talked of at the dinner table but the trip to Guaymas and the peculiar incident connected with it. Next morning the second convoy started out, and as they approached Rio Chico the two boys kept a sharp lookout for the bandits. They did not appear, and the train proceeded to Guaymas without incident. When the boys returned to Real del Monte they heard that an ore train on the eastern side of the Sierra Madre had been attacked and captured. The Crimson Mask had evidently been at work on his former stamping-grounds. The boys had been three weeks in Mexico, and there was hardly an hour during that time in which Jack had not thought of Mercedes Castilano. He wondered when her father was going to send for him to pay the anticipated visit at his hacienda.

Jack hoped that the don had not gone back on the arrangement, for he was eager to meet the Spanish beauty again. He believed she would be delighted to see him also. A meeting between them depended wholly on her father's pleasure, however, and until the promised vehicle was sent the boy felt he could do nothing. The Winter family and the two boys were at breakfast on the third Sunday morning of Jack and Bob's advent into Mexico when, during a break in the conversation, Miss Clara said:

"Father, have you any objections to my going to San Pedro to-day with Jack and Bob to see the church and monastery of the Brotherhood?"

"Hum! That's a long horseback ride—all of forty miles there and back. Do you think you could stand the trip?"

"I'll stand anything for the pleasure of looking at those ancient edifices," she answered. "We ought to be able to make the trip inside of three hours, put in an hour seeing the sights, another at dinner at the village inn, which we can order on our arrival, and then three more on the road back. That will be eight hours. If we start right away, we should be back before dark."

"And your escorts—have they consented to undertake this trip?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack. "We three talked it

over last night, and it was decided to go if you had no insurmountable objection."

"Oh, very well. I place my daughter in your care, and I have no doubt that you will bring her home safe and sound," said the general manager.

"Yes, sir, we'll look after her," said Bob, who was somewhat smitten with the young lady, though she, on her part, divided her smiles equally between the boys.

A peon was called and received his orders. Clara retired to her room to put on her riding dress, while the boys strolled outside to await the bringing-up of the stout pony and two horses.

"Don't you think we'd better carry our revolvers?" said Bob.

"Now that would look well on Sunday, wouldn't it?" said Jack. "There isn't any danger, or Mr. Winter would have vetoed the arrangement off-hand."

"We might meet the Crimson Mask and his band."

"If we did, a couple of revolvers wouldn't do us a whole lot of good; but there is little danger of that. They are doubtless twenty or thirty miles to the northeast in the Sierra Madre. It is only a few days ago that they pillaged that ore train on the other side of the range, and retreated with the spoils to their rendezvous, which everybody agrees is in some inaccessible part of the mountains where the soldiers couldn't find them a couple of months ago when they were scouring the district," said Jack.

"All right," said Bob. "I only offered the suggestion."

"I applaud your foresight, only it's unnecessary in this case."

"San Pedro is about five miles north of Rio Chico, Miss Clara said."

"Something like that."

"In the same mountains that we paid the brief visit to that day."

"Yes. The glen with the waterfall is at the extreme southern end of the range."

"Don Castilano's hacienda is somewhere between those two villages, don't you think?"

"I'll be hanged if I know where it is. I wish I did."

"Kind of funny that the Don didn't keep his word to send for you. He and his daughter are under great obligations to you."

"There must be a good reason for his not doing so, for he is surely a gentleman, if I ever met one. I am satisfied that I shall hear from him, for Spaniards of standing are very scrupulous about their honor, and wouldn't break their word under any circumstances. Probably he thinks it best to let me get accustomed to my new surroundings before he arranges for the visit."

"We might pass his hacienda on our way to San Pedro without knowing it."

"It is quite possible, but even if I knew the place I would not venture to call there on my own responsibility."

"I should think you'd take a long chance for the pleasure of meeting his daughter again. You appear to be dead gone on her," grinned Bob.

"How do you know that I'm dead gone on her?" asked Jack, with a flush.

"For reasons. Besides, you're blushing like a full-blown sunset now."

"Get out."

The simultaneous appearance of the horses and Miss Clara put an end to the discussion; the party mounted and, waving their adieus to Mr. and Mrs. Winter, took the road leading to Rio Chico. There was no danger of their missing the way, for when they got in sight of Rio Chico all they had to do was to turn and ride north parallel with the mountains till they came to a broad opening in the range. Riding up into this they would presently see the village of San Pedro nestling within, and the church and monastery on the heights beyond. In less than two hours after leaving the house they discovered Rio Chico ahead.

"We have made pretty good time," said Jack. "You are a fine rider, Miss Clara."

"I dearly love to ride, and as I have been in the habit of going out nearly every day since we came here, I ought to be a fair rider by this time. Practice makes perfect, you know," she laughed.

"Bob has rounded to pretty well for a fellow who never rode anything wilder than the untamed goat on which he was initiated into the secret order of the Knights of Coveo," chuckled Jack.

"Do you belong to a secret order, Mr. Bassett?" asked Clara, with a look of interest. "It must be great fun to be initiated. I've heard my father say that he was obliged to ride a goat when he joined the Masons."

"No, Miss Clara, I don't belong to any secret order. That was just one of Jack's jokes," said Bob.

"Aren't you just horrid, Jack Redwood!" cried the girl, with a pout.

"I'm anything you say, Miss Clara. I wouldn't dispute your word for the world," said Jack. "We'll turn off the road here, I guess."

In half an hour they were riding up toward the opening beyond which was San Pedro. They had nearly reached it when a black horse flashed into sight, ridden by a female. She was approaching at a fast gallop, which showed she was an accomplished equestrian. Suddenly Jack felt a thrill run through his blood. His sharp eyes had recognized the fair rider as Mercedes Castilano.

CHAPTER X.—What Jack Said to Mercedes.

A moment later Bob identified her.

"Gosh! It's the Spanish girl, Mercedes, Jack," he exclaimed.

"Why, do you know that young lady?" asked Clara, with a tinge of jealousy, for she saw that the rider was more than ordinarily charming.

"No, but Jack does. She's the girl he saved from the snake, don't you remember?" said Bob.

The fair Spaniard seemed to have recognized her preserver in the party of three, for she reined in her steed, which was a magnificent animal, and came on with less speed. On the impulse of the moment Jack started ahead of his party to meet her.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Senorita Mercedes," he said, raising his hat.

"Why, Senor Jack, what brings you here?" cried Mercedes, with a bewitching smile that completed Jack's enslavement. "I am so glad to see you."

They halted and she offered her hand.

"My friend and I are escorting Miss Winter, the daughter of our employer, on a flying visit to the church and monastery of San Pedro. We have heard it is something worth seeing," said Jack.

The smile faded out of Mercedes's face and she looked serious.

"I am sorry you are going there," she said, "for you will be disappointed if you expect to go through the monastery. It is possible you may be permitted to see the church. As a rule no one but the priest and his assistant enters the building except in the morning when mass is read, or in the evening at vespers; as for the monastery, it is wholly closed to visitors."

"That is too bad. Miss Winter will be greatly disappointed, for she, more than Bob and I, undertook this round trip of forty miles to see both buildings. Come, I will introduce you to her, and also to my chum."

Mercedes showed no eagerness for the introduction. She saw that Clara was pretty and shapely, and perhaps she was not pleased to find Senor Jack, who was never out of her thoughts, in her company. But she went forward with Jack to the spot where Bob and Clara had stopped.

"Miss Winter, this is Senorita Castilano," said Jack, in Spanish.

Clara bowed in a friendly way, but the Spanish girl acknowledged the introduction in a well bred but haughty manner, taking in the fair American with a rapid sweep of her beautiful eyes. Jack told Clara what Mercedes had said about the impossibility of inspecting either the monastery or the church, and the American girl showed great disappointment, just as the boy expected she would. Mercedes admitted that it was a pity, and then invited the party to visit her father's hacienda, which was on the mountain side overlooking the village. Jack accepted on behalf of himself and his friends, then he and Mercedes, riding together, took the lead into the secluded valley. Mercedes told him that her father would have kept his promise to send a carriage for him but for the fact that he had been away a considerable part of the time. He was now at the hacienda and had told her he intended to send for Senor Jack on the following day.

"It isn't necessary for your father to send for me," said Jack. "I can ride over here myself just as well as not."

"But now that you are here you will stay, will you not?" said Mercedes.

"It would give me great pleasure to do so if I could; but I must return with my friend Bob and Miss Winter, as I am partly responsible for her safe return."

Mercedes looked disappointed.

"Senorita Winter, you like her very much, is it not so?" she said, looking steadily at Jack.

"She is a very nice girl, and of course I like her; but I like somebody else better."

"Somebody else!" exclaimed Mercedes, with a flash in her eyes. "Ah, you then have a sweetheart in the States?"

"No. I have no sweetheart. The only girl I care for in the world thinks of me only as a friend."

"And who is she?"

Jack shook his head.

"You will not tell me, Senor Jack?" with a jealous flash.

"No; it is impossible."

Mercedes became silent and constrained, and they rode in silence for a few moments.

"Have I offended you, Senorita Mercedes?" he said at length.

"Oh, no; it is nothing to me, this girl that you care for. She does not interest me in the least," she replied, drawing herself up with all the pride of her race. "Let us talk about something else."

Jack, however, saw that her manner had suddenly grown cold and distant, and his face reflected his own feelings. He made no effort to talk about something else, and so they rode along without a word, while Bob and Clara laughed and chatted behind them. In a minute or two the village of San Pedro burst upon their view. It was only a small collection of one-story houses and thatched hovels, in all not more than fifty or sixty. They stood in picturesque confusion on the left slope of the range, and overflowed into the narrow valley. On the right was a long, rambling building of two-stories, partly hidden by a cactus grove, and flanked by many small one-story buildings on the slope behind it, the whole collection sleeping peacefully in the sunshine. This was the hacienda.

Straight ahead was the church, of so pretentious an appearance that it looked out of place in such humble surroundings; while above and behind it towered the monastery of the Brotherhood of San Pedro, built solidly of stone, and bearing every trace of its 150 years of existence. The scene itself was one well worth coming some distance to gaze on, and Clara uttered an exclamation of admiration. But as her eyes rested on the church and the monastery, her disappointment was increased when she reflected that the interiors were closed to strangers. Bob and Clara gazed around with interested attention, but to Jack the scene might have been a blank wall for all the pleasure he took in it. Bob noticed his solemn look.

"What's the matter, old man?" he asked. "You look as if you had just lost your best friend."

"Don't worry about me," replied his chum, sharply.

Bob knew that something was the matter, and he laid the change in Jack's manner to something that had taken place between him and Mercedes. He saw that his chum was in no humor to be twitted, so he prudently held his tongue. The party had stopped for a moment, and then Mercedes and Jack again went on in advance.

"Senorita Mercedes, I have certainly offended you," began Jack.

"Not in the least," she answered with a short laugh that sounded harshly on his ears. "I could not be offended at anything you said. Do I not owe my life to you?"

Her voice broke into a momentary softness.

"Please do not refer to that," he said earnestly.

"I only did my duty. Anybody would have done the same for you. But in meeting you I have

lost something that—well, what's the use of talking? It would not interest you to know. I suppose I can stand it. At any rate I'll have to."

The tone of his voice caused her to regard him intently.

"What did you lose, Senor Jack?" she asked.

"I can't tell you any more than I could answer your other questions," he said.

"Is it very valuable this thing that you have lost?" she asked.

"I would rather not discuss it."

"I am sorry, Senor Jack, that is saving my life you should lose something you think so much of," in a tone of sympathy. "You have hunted for it and could not find it. Ah, if I knew what it was I would look for it for you. I would not rest till I had found it."

Jack remained silent.

"Won't you tell me what it is?" she said, laying her hand on his arm.

"I wish I could, but—I dare not."

"Dare not, Senor Jack," she exclaimed, opening her eyes in surprise.

"No, I haven't the nerve."

"And yet you dared tell my father to his face that—" she stopped abruptly and with a kind of startled confusion.

"I don't understand you, Senorita Mercedes."

She uttered a little forced laugh.

"It is nothing. See, yonder comes my father. He will be surprised to see you, but none the less glad. It is a pity that you cannot stay with us now. Perhaps my father can arrange to send some one in your place with your friend Senorita Winter so that they will surely get back home in safety."

"Do you wish me to stay, very much?"

"Why what a question, Senor Jack," she cried, with a vivid blush. "Do you not believe I do?"

"I should be very glad to know that you did. I should be very happy to feel that my company was half as welcome to you as yours is to me."

"Ah, Senor Jack!" blushed Mercedes. "You must not say that to me. It is not fair to the only girl you care for in all the world."

"Why not," he replied, in sudden desperation, "when that girl is—you. There, you have forced the secret from me, and if I have offended you I can't help it. I have loved you from the first moment I looked at you. It was my heart I lost in the glen of the waterfall, and you have it in your keeping. You may not want it, it is true, but I can no more help loving you than yonder sun can help shining in a clear sky. If I could win you I'd be the happiest boy in the world; but I have no such expectations. You are the only daughter of a proud Spanish Don, while I—well, I'm nobody but a plain American boy, with my fortune to carve through my own efforts. Now you know the truth, and I hope I have not offended you."

Mercedes did not reply. She could not, for her own heart was in a tumult. Her whole nature thrilled as he acknowledged he loved her. The emotions of her young heart painted her cheeks with a hue that vied with the reddest rose that ever grew. And she was happy—happier at that moment than she had ever been in her life, for she had loved Senor Jack at first sight, and now she knew he loved her.

CHAPTER XI.—At San Pedro.

And so they rode forward side by side, without exchanging another word until they halted before Don Castilano, who recognized Jack with not a little surprise.

"Welcome, Senor Redwood. Welcome to my hacienda, and pardon my seeming neglect in not sending the promised carriage for you."

"I'm glad to meet you again, Don Castilano," said Jack, springing off his horse. "Let me introduce you to Miss Winter, the daughter of the manager of La Rosas mine." The Spaniard bowed courteously. "Also to my friend, Robert Bassett, of San Francisco, California."

The Don expressed the pleasure he felt at making their acquaintance, speaking in very good English. The Spaniard then invited them all to accept the hospitality of his home. They were soon seated in the spacious patio, which was paved with well-scrubbed stones, laid in geometrical designs, and shaded by the usual pecan trees. Fragrant roses bloomed on all sides, mingled with other gorgeous plants. Jack subsequently learned that the house was older even than the monastery, and was the original residence of the Brotherhood of San Pedro in its infancy. A substantial meal was ordered prepared by the Don, for he knew that his guests must be hungry after their long ride from Real del Monte, and until it was ready the party talked together in a lively style, that is Bob excepted, for his inability to converse in Spanish placed him at a disadvantage.

However, he and Don Castilano were able to get along fairly well together, while Jack and the two girls made up a group of their own. Now that Mercedes saw that she stood in no fear of Clara as a rival for Jack's heart, she dropped the haughty, distant manner she had at first assumed toward Miss Winter, and treated her in a particularly friendly way. She did not sit next to Jack, but on the other side of Clara, and even when she replied to the young American she did not at any time look at him. Under these circumstances Jack was not sure how she had taken his declaration of love. He was not sorry he made it, for at least it set his position right in the senorita's mind, and cleared up the misunderstanding she had at first labored under. Finally the meal was announced and all went in to the dining-room. Mercedes and her father had already dined, and so they merely sat down to keep their guests company.

"Don Castilano, why are the church and monastery closed to public inspection?" said Jack.

"There are reasons connected with the latter which I cannot explain, Senor Redwood. The church, however, is not absolutely interdicted to strangers. They can see the interior by applying at the priest's quarters on the ground floor of the monastery, when an assistant will show them through the edifice. It is very well worth seeing, being much superior to the usual country church."

"Miss Winter came on this trip especially to see the church and the monastery, of which she has heard a great deal to arouse her curiosity," said Jack.

"I regret that it will be impossible for her to enter the monastery. Strangers are not allowed within the postern gate. After all there is nothing that is so very interesting there. The rooms are mostly of cell-like appearance and proportions, for the Brotherhood led a very austere life. They have absolutely no furniture. The Brothers slept on beds of straw or dried brush, and knelt on the bare stones when they performed their private devotions. The ground floor, now occupied by the resident pastors, is the only part of the building that is worthy of inspection. Here the rooms are large, particularly the refectory, where the Brotherhood took their meals at long bare tables, seated on benches without backs. There are niches about this room that once were filled with solid silver images, it is said. They are empty now. Where the images went no one knows. The monastery was never despoiled by vandals, so the inference is that they were hidden by the last of the Brotherhood, with all the valuable vessels and decorations connected with the church. The church, however, you can see. I will send a servant for the key, and will show it to you myself," said the Don.

Although Clara and the boys would liked to have gone through the monastery, their disappointment was rendered less keen when they heard that they were to view the church. The Don said there were several rare paintings in it, which had been brought from Europe more than 100 years since, and that the carvings in the wooden altar were really excellent pieces of work. The wooden panels, representing the "stations of the cross," had also been executed by some member or members of the Brotherhood. Before the meal was over the Spaniard excused himself to send for the key of the church, and when the young people arose from the table he was ready to accompany them. Mercedes went along, of course, but Jack could not get her wholly to himself, as she persisted in attaching herself to Clara, and so the boys walked on either side, with the Don by himself in advance. The interior of the church surprised Clara and the boys. It was quite spacious, considering the size of the congregation that attended the two morning masses on Sunday and holy days, or even at the evening vespers service, when all went in a body.

It had a framed roof covered with thatch, and this roof was supported by heavy columns, arched from one to the other, giving free ingress to the light and air from the garden on either side. When Jack looked at these open walls, the base hardly more than two feet high all around, he thought it almost a superfluous precaution to lock the double front doors. Anybody could enter the church at his ease by way of the gardens. He afterward discovered that it was impossible to get into the gardens except through a small door at the back of the church owing to the thick and high wall of prickly cactus which surrounded them completely. They were standing in the center of the stone floor, which had no pews to obstruct it—the worshippers kneeling on it all through mass, which was something of a penance, when you come to think of it—gazing at the picture of the "Immaculate Conception," above the altar, when Jack noticed that one of the floor blocks bore the words in Latin, "Et expecto resur-

rectionem mortuorum" (And I expect the resurrection of the dead).

"Why is that there, and what does it mean?" he asked the Don.

Don Castilano translated the sentence and then explained that the slab covered the stone steps leading down into the vaults under the church where some 200 of the Brotherhood were buried, several of whom had been there nearly 150 years.

"It is said that the Brotherhood hid a considerable treasure in the vaults, including all the church vessels and ornaments and images that you mentioned at the house."

"You mustn't believe all you hear, Senor Redwood," said the Spaniard, with a slight frown. "It is true that the mysterious disappearance of the ornaments, vessels and images has given rise to the impression that they are hidden somewhere in the vaults, but they can hardly be called a treasure, though quite valuable. The authorities of the State once searched the vaults for the alleged treasure, but they found nothing, and went away convinced that there is nothing of value there."

The Don then showed them through the gardens, which were one mass of blooming plants, after which they left to return to the hacienda, passing close to the wall of the monastery so they could obtain as near a view as possible of the old edifice from the outside. The postern gate happening to be open, they caught a view of the courtyard, which gave them an idea of the depth of the enclosure. When they reached the hacienda, Jack said it was time for them to start on their return. Mercedes said something in a low tone to her father and he nodded.

"Now that you are here, Senor Redwood, why not remain with us for a week or so?" said the Don. "One of my servants shall go with your friends and see that they reach home in safety. It will save you the trouble of riding over to-morrow or next day, for I was about to send for you."

Jack was perfectly willing to stay. In fact he was eager to do so, for it meant many *tete-a-tetes* in prospect with Mercedes, but he was not sure that such an arrangement would meet with Miss Winter's approbation. Clara, however, quickly put any doubts he had to rest by saying that she guessed Jack had better stay and get his visit over with, since he had talked so much about it that she felt sure he would have a very pleasant time. And so it was decided that Jack should remain and one of the Don's servants take his place as Miss Winter's second escort.

"You will have to take the next convoy out, Bob," said Jack. "Look out for it, and take no chances."

"Leave that to me," replied Bob.

Then the Don, Mercedes and Jack said goodby, and off they rode.

CHAPTER XII.—What Jack Overheard.

Don Castilano invited Jack to take a walk around his property, the cultivated fields of which extended up the mountain slope behind the hacienda. The young American accepted the invitation though he would have much preferred the

company of Mercedes. She, however, had disappeared without a word to him, and in consequence he was a bit uneasy as to the real state of her feelings toward him. Jack and the Don spent an hour rambling around the property. On their return the boy caught sight of a man at the door of one of the outhouses. He retired abruptly on seeing them, but from the brief look Jack caught of his face he could have sworn he was the emissary of the Crimson Mask who delivered the note to him at the head of the mule convoy on his first trip.

Jack met Mercedes at the evening meal. She sat facing him, and was shy about looking his way when she knew he was looking at her. She did not have much to say, and so the bulk of the conversation was carried on in Spanish between the Don and his young visitor. Jack was afraid Mercedes would take another flight after supper, but she did not, and Don Castilano left them together in the patio.

"We always go to vespers, Sunday night, Senor Jack," Mercedes said. "Have you any objection going with us?"

"None whatever," replied Jack. "My mother was a Catholic, and I have often attended that Church, though I'm not a regular attendant at any."

From that point the conversation went on, Jack taking care to avoid saying anything sentimental. He was satisfied to have the girl he loved by his side, where he could listen to the music of her voice in softly spoken Spanish, and look at her gloriously beautiful face from time to time. She on her part seldom glanced at him, but once when his hand rested on her arm the thrill that swept through her warm Spanish blood sent waves of color to her cheeks, and she breathed quicker as her heart beat faster. At length the church bell sounded and the Don reappeared. He was pleased to learn that his guest was going to attend the evening service, and he appeared to regard Jack with increased favor. As they walked to the church Jack saw groups of the villagers winding their way in the same direction. There were no absentees but the sick of Sabbath evening. When they drew near the door they were saluted with great respect by the people who drew aside to let them pass. The Don led the way up to their accustomed spot on one side near the altar, where the Don and Mercedes knelt and Jack, of course, followed their example. The priest and altar boys had not yet appeared, and Jack glanced around on the kneeling congregation, and noted their costumes and general appearance. Suddenly his eyes rested on the slab that bore the Latin inscription. No one knelt there, and it stood out clear and distinct in an open space. Jack's thoughts began to concern themselves with the gloomy vaults of the dead below. And from the dead they easily reverted to the treasure that was supposed to be hidden somewhere there. The church, the worshippers and even the priest and the three boys, one carrying the censer, from which issued at times thin whiffs of white smoke, all vanished from his material vision, as his thoughts went groping around among the gloomy vaults that his fancy painted, wondering if the treasure was really hidden in that sepulchre of

the dead. At length the short service was over, and everybody filed outside. The Don, Mercedes and Jack were the last to leave. Together they walked back to the hacienda. The moon was just rising about the mountains as they reached it. Jack and Mercedes paused outside to look at it, while the Spaniard went in. There is a witchery in the moon, but more so in a semi-tropical country like Mexico than elsewhere, and it had its effect on the young people. For some moments they stood in silence, then Jack said:

"Are you provoked with me, Mercedes?"

"Provoked!" she murmured.

"At my boldness in telling you that I loved you?"

She made no reply.

"I told you the truth. It is no crime to tell a girl you love her better than your life as I do you. I do not suppose you care for me other than a friend, but I had to tell you just the same, even at the risk of displeasing you. Now I am to stay here a week and we shall be much together. If my confession was distasteful to you I want you to know it now, and henceforth my lips will always be on their guard. I will mention love no more, we will part as the best of friends. But I shall carry your image always in my thoughts, and think of you as the one girl who might have made me happy."

He stopped and the soft night breeze wafted to the spot the tinkling of a guitar from some spot not far distant. Then rose a clear tenor voice, and from the lips of the singer rippled a warm Spanish love song. Jack and Mercedes listened with bated breath. They stood as motionless as statues till the last note died out. Then the young American drew a long breath.

"Mercedes," he said, "that is my finish. I can't stay here longer than to-night. I cannot enjoy your society and feel like a lost soul peering in at the gates of Paradise. I must go and see you no more."

"No, no; you must not. I cannot let you go. I love you—I love you!" cried Mercedes, throwing her arms around his neck, in her impulsive, Spanish way, and laying her lovely face close to his.

An hour later when Jack retired to his room he stood and looked out of the window, which faced the village.

"I must find out who the singer was," he thought. "He did the business for me, and I shall never forget him as long as I live. And I will reward him for it if I can get the chance."

As he was about to turn away two shadowy figures came from around an angle of the building. They seemed to glide forward rather than walk, and they stopped under the window.

"You heard what the captain said, Sanchez?" said the taller of the two. "The business is to be done to-night."

"Si, I heard him. Caramba! He is truly a dare-devil to venture into the vaults among the dead in search of that treasure."

"There is nothing he won't attempt. You ought to know that by this time."

"He is certainly what the Americanos call 'the limit.' If the treasure is there he will find it."

"If it is there? It is there. The paper the captain secured proves that, but the most im-

portant part of the directions were missing—torn off in some way."

"How unfortunate! In what part of the vaults is it supposed to be?"

"At the southwest end."

"If we were caught in that vault there would be trouble for us. The priests and people would regard it as a sacrilege, and that's a serious thing, Pedro."

"We will not be caught. The captain will have all avenues of approach guarded against surprise. Besides, at three in the morning all are asleep. Do not fear, Sanchez, we shall not be molested."

"I am not sure that I like the enterprise."

"Ha! Tell that to the captain."

"El demonio! I see myself doing that. I know the Crimson Mask too well to take chances with him."

"Bueno!" laughed the other. "Then you will be on hand, for his orders include you and myself to attend him to the vaults."

"By the saints this is not pleasant news," growled Sanchez. "I would rather face a regiment than the ghosts of the Brotherhood."

"Talk that way to the captain, and he will make a ghost of you. Don't be a bobo (fool). The Brotherhood are too happy in the next world to bother about what is going on in their vaults. Consider, amigo, the Crimson Mask honors us when he asks us to accompany him. Our share of the treasure will be greater in consequence. Isn't that a pleasant reflection, Sanchez?"

"Very; but the treasure is not found yet, Pedro. It is not well to count one's chickens too soon. By the way, I see that boy—the young Americano who saved the Senorita Mercedes from the dama blanca, and who says he is not afraid of the captain—he is here at the hacienda to stay a while."

"Yes; I saw him to-day. It is a mistake to have him around. He has sharp eyes, and there is no telling what he might see. If he learned this was the roost of the Crimson Mask——"

"Bah! Why should he learn anything when the whole village is ignorant of the fact?"

"The captain was a fool to send me to him with that note. It is all on account of the senorita. He will do anything for her."

"Except give up the business."

"When we secure the treasure that will end it. Most of the silver has already been turned into money. Only the last lot is still on hand. While the soldiers are again hunting for us in the Sierra Madre we will quietly disband, and enjoy life on the proceeds. I shall feel sorry when it is all over."

"Caramba! You have queer taste. I shall be glad."

"Well, let us go and have a drink or two to the success of to-night's work."

At that moment the moon, which had been hidden behind a cloud during the interview, came out and shone full on their faces. Jack, who had been watching and listening, caught a good look at them. Yes, the man Pedro was the chap who had carried to him the note from the Crimson Mask.

CHAPTER XIII.—In the Vaults of the Dead.

Jack watched the men depart with rather tumultuous feelings. So this place was the secret

rendezvous of the Crimson Mask. And the Crimson Mask—the daring leader of the bandits who killed Smith, and looted so many silver ore convoys—had he discovered his identity?

Was he— Jack hesitated to breathe his suspicions even to himself, for they circled around the father of the girl he loved, and who had declared her love for him that night under the light of the glorious moon. Who else could the Crimson Mask be if not the Don? Then across his brain flashed all that had passed between him and the Don in the glen, and it certainly had a significant tinge.

Then on top of it all came the note from the bandit assuring him that his convoy would not be molested, and that at all times he would be accorded the right of way to Guaymas. If it was a fact that Don Castilano was masquerading as the Crimson Mask bandit, was it not his clear duty to inform the authorities of the State through Mr. Winter? And yet could he bring the father of Mercedes to justice?

Suddenly his thoughts reverted to the treasure in the vaults of the church, the existence of which seemed to be established by the conversation he had just overheard. He looked at his watch. It was eleven o'clock. Four hours intervened before the bandits would descend on the church. Had he the nerve to make use of those four hours to his own possible advantage by making an attempt to find the treasure himself? Yes, he thought he had. Having come to a determination to put the adventure through, he proceeded to prepare for it. He had to have a light to find his way around the vaults. He would take the small lamp in his room. Then he needed an implement to pry up one side of the slab in the church. He found what he wanted in a thin piece of steel, a foot long, which some one had left on the window ledge. He removed his shoes, and with the lamp in one hand, and the steel in his pocket, he made his way down stairs to the patio. The moonlight illuminated it. He knew the position of the different doors, and going to one of them, he found no difficulty in letting himself out. Then he started for the church, keeping as much as possible in the shadows of the trees and hedges.

Proceeding to the rear where the postern gate was, he examined the cactus as he went. In one spot near the ground he noticed an opening. Examining it carefully he judged that he could crawl through. Pushing the lamp ahead of him he essayed the task. His calculations were correct, and he presently stood up inside the garden. Gliding across the garden he reached the arched openings to the church. As he had no time to lose he stepped into the church and advanced toward the stone which bore the Latin inscription. High up in front of the altar, and hanging by a long bronze chain from a beam of the roof, burned a dim red light—a floating wick in perhaps a half pint of oil. Kneeling beside the stone, which worked on concealed hinges, Jack inserted the steel bar and easily pried up the slab. Grabbing it by the edge he lifted it on its hinges and exposed to his view the stone flight of steps. A dry and musty odor reached his nose. Jack now lighted the lamp and with his whole mind filled with thoughts of the treasure of San Pedro he descended into the vaults.

As soon as Jack reached the floor, curiosity induced him to go to the east to see the coffins, for he judged that it must be an odd sight to see so many arranged in such close order, after the fashion of a receiving tomb in a public cemetery. A few steps brought him to the other line of old-fashioned wooden coffins. On the foot of each coffin was painted a number and the year of interment. Jack had no time to waste in this quarter of the vaults. He simply took a rapid and comprehensive survey of the coffins as a whole, and then hurried over to the southwest. If he expected to find any marks that would furnish a clue to the treasure he was disappointed. He spent an hour in a vain search.

"I'll have to give it up," he muttered, disappointedly. "If the treasure is hidden here the Brothers who placed it in concealment intended it should never be found until the building was utterly demolished, which will not be soon. I must get away before the Crimson Mask and his followers appear on the scene, for they probably would not treat me very gently if they caught me in the church."

Retracing his steps to the stone stairs he blew out the lamp and ascended. But an unpleasant surprise awaited him. When Jack appeared up the steps of the vault he was seized by Pedro.

"Aha! We have caught you!" he cried exultantly. "Down with you among the bones of the padres!"

The man with the Crimson Mask looked on and chuckled.

CHAPTER XIV.—A Boy of True Courage.

Pedro forced Jack down the steps and followed himself with a strong grip on his arm. Behind him came Sanchez with a lantern.

The man with the Crimson Mask approached and gazed at Jack in the circle of the lantern light. Jack looked at him attentively. He was the same height and build as the Don, and had the same polished manner. He also wore the identical kind of a ring on one of his fingers that the boy had seen on the Don's hand.

"Well, young senor, what have you to say for yourself?" asked the Crimson Mask. "What brings you to the vaults of San Pedro when you ought to be asleep in your room at the hacienda?"

"I have nothing to say at all, Don Castilano. You see I recognize you," replied Jack, boldly.

The Crimson Mask chuckled while a grin appeared on the rascally-looking faces of Pedro and Sanchez.

"Upon my word you are a brave youth. Have you no fear of the dead?"

"None whatever."

"Caramba! You would make a fine bandit," said the Crimson Mask in a tone of admiration. "I would make you an offer only for the fact that the days of the band are numbered—not by the authorities, but by ourselves. The Crimson Mask band, the terror of the Sierra Madre, will presently cease to exist."

"I am glad to hear it," said Jack.

"Why, senor? You, at least, appear not to be afraid of us."

"For the sake of your daughter—the best and sweetest little girl on the face of the earth."

"Aha! Have you fallen a slave to her charms?"

"If I have I am not ashamed of it. Until tonight I regarded you as one of nature's noblemen—a Spaniard of high birth and breeding, who would scorn to cast the faintest blemish on the proud Castilian name he bore. As such I believed you would look down on a union between your only child and an American boy who had no money nor a distinguished family at his back. But now that I find you are the chief of a gang of ruffians—thieves—you have so greatly fallen in my estimation that I blush for you."

"Senor, you are the first person who ever dared talk this way to me and escape the consequences on the spot. If you hadn't saved the life of my daughter—well, no matter. You saved her and that fact protects you. But you are now too dangerous to my interests for me to permit you to leave these vaults until the safety of myself and my men are assured. We came here to secure the treasure of San Pedro and with it and our other spoils to leave the country forever. If we are successful we will have left the valley tomorrow night. One of my band I shall leave behind to supply you with food until it is safe to let you go."

"And you take Mercedes with you, and I never shall meet her again?" said Jack, his voice breaking for the first time.

There was a pause, during which he could see the eyes of the Crimson Mask scanning him through the slits of his disguise.

"You love her?" he said at length, in a changed voice.

"As I love my country for whom I would at any time lay down my life," replied Jack.

"And she—does she care for you?"

"She loves me with all her heart—with all her being."

"And believing as you do that her father has dishonored his proud name and lineage by associating himself with a band of bandits, you would marry her?"

"I would. The world if it learned the truth might look with scorn upon her, but I would protect her against the world. I would draw around her form the Stars and Stripes of the greatest nation on the face of the globe and defy man or woman to speak ill of her."

"Senor Redwood, you are a young gentleman, and I feel proud to offer you my hand," said the Crimson Mask, extending his arm.

"Pardon me, Don Castilano, I must decline to take it."

"Caranba! This is too much. Pedro, Sanchez, bind him to yonder column. We have already lost too much time with him," cried the Crimson Mask.

Jack was speedily forced against the column in question, and bound with a rope that passed several times around his body, pinning his arms to his side. There he was left and the three men strode to the southwest corner of the vaults to search for the treasure. For more than an hour Jack watched the flickering light of the lantern as it passed from spot to spot, or rested for minutes in one place. At the end of that time the Crimson Mask and his two companions returned to the place where the boy was.

"Adios, young senor," said the leader, with an ironical bow. "I fear your stay here will be longer than was intended for the treasure has eluded our first search. One of my men will supply you with food, and you will see us again tomorrow morning. Your captivity will continue till we find the treasure, for on that we depend. Mercedes will miss you, but that is unavoidable. I will assure her that you are perfectly safe, and that your absence is necessary to my safety and that of the band. She knows me and will not dare complain. Buenos noches."

CHAPTER XV.—The Treasure of San Pedro.

We will not attempt to analyze Jack's thoughts as he stood bound and helpless in the vaults of the church of San Pedro. At length utter weariness overcome him and he fell into a deep sleep, from which he was aroused some hours later by Pedro and Sanchez, who had brought a supply of food and wine to him. His right arm was released and he was told to help himself. He did not turn down the invitation for he was hungry. When Jack finished his meal the men rebound his arm and went away, telling him they would return after dark with his dinner.

As time elapsed, at a rate he had no idea of, his thoughts were divided alternately between Mercedes and the treasure. He thought most of the girl, for she was a definite object, while the treasure was rather problematical. The slab was lifted and the two bandits reappeared with a basket full of food for the prisoner. They were unaware that in spite of all their precautions they had been seen by no less a person than Mercedes. The girl had been informed that Jack Redwood had been temporarily dealt with for the good of those concerned, and would not appear at the hacienda for several days at least. There was a scene between her and her informant, from which she retired in tears. She went to her room and stayed there the greater part of the day.

Suddenly a thought occurred to her, and then a look of determination came over her face. She called her maid and had a talk with her. The result of this was that just at dark a figure somewhat resembling the maid, but which was Mercedes herself, left the house and took its way to the church. On the way she stopped at the monastery and secured the key of the postern gate which would admit her to the church gardens. She entered the church and retired to a corner. In a short time she saw Pedro and Sanchez come in with the basket of provisions, raise the slab communicating with the vaults and go down.

Hardly had they disappeared when she glided across to the opening and listened. She heard voices below at a distance. Though feeling the usual dread, love conquered fear and she descended. With Pedro's lantern to guide her steps she went softly forward to a point where she could see Jack bound to the pillar. There she remained while the boy ate his dinner, turning over in her mind the best plan to adopt to free him. Sanchez had just replaced the plates in the basket and Pedro was reaching for the lantern when she made a sudden dash forward.

"Pedro, I order you to——"

That was as far as she got for her words were drowned by a yell of terror from Sanchez. He dropped the basket and fled like a demented man. Pedro, startled beyond measure, followed him in a hurry. Both scurried up the steps, Pedro pausing only long enough to close the slab, thus shutting the senorita in with her lover.

"Oh, Jack, Jack—mi alma! (my soul)," she cried, throwing her arms around his neck, and kissing him.

"Mercedes!" exclaimed the astonished boy. "You here!"

"Si, si. I am come to save you."

"My darling! How brave of you! Have you a knife to cut me free?"

"I have my dagger," drawing it from her bosom.

In a minute or so Jack was free.

"Now let us go," she said.

Jack picked up the lantern and led the way to the stairs, Mercedes clinging to his arm. When they reached them the darkness above showed that the stone was in its place, and their retreat cut off.

"Ave Maria!" cried Mercedes. "We are shut in."

"Never mind, love. Your father will come for you as soon as those rascals report to him their scare, and he misses you."

"They report to him! They know better."

"Know better! Are they not his men?"

"His men! Never! He would scorn to——"

"What! Is not your father the Crimson Mask?"

"He the Crimson Mask! Oh, heavens! Why do you think that? No, no, he is not."

"No!" cried Jack, with a thrill of joy. "Then who is the Crimson Mask?"

"It is my uncle. My father's twin brother—Luis Castilano."

"And I thought it was your father. Forgive me, love."

"You are forgiven."

Jack led her toward the southwest corner of the vaults.

"Your uncle is searching for the treasure of San Pedro which is somewhere here if his information is correct," said Jack, striking the blank wall with his hand.

There was a loud click and a section of the wall fell away in the shape of a secret door.

"Eureka!" cried the astonished boy, drawing the girl into the hidden chamber.

In their excitement they did not notice the door closing on its hinges. The room was filled with shelves, and these were covered with silver images, church vessels, and ornaments; also a large dinner service of plate. Around on the floor were stacked pile on pile of silver ingots, weighing probably ten pounds each, and all of one size. There were hundreds of them, all of a brilliant white color. As Jack gazed on the contents of the room there was no doubt in his mind that he had discovered the treasure of San Pedro. We will not dwell on their surprise and pleasure. For the moment their peculiar position was forgotten.

"Your uncle must not get hold of this. It is ours by right of discovery, Mercedes," said Jack. "Ours to begin life on and be happy."

At that moment she noticed that the door was

shut and called his attention to the fact. Things began to look dubious until Jack noticed a door in the corner. This let them into a narrow tunnel through which Jack led the way. After traversing a considerable distance they came to a blank wall which barred further progress. But the lantern light revealed a brass knob, which Jack pushed and a small door opened through which they passed. As it was closing of itself the boy shoved the piece of steel he had under it so that it stood a little ajar. They now found themselves in the cellar of the monastery, with a flight of steps before them. Ascending them they came into the kitchen, which was untenanted. A door let them out in the courtyard. They hurried to the postern gate, and Jack opened it without difficulty. Fifteen minutes later they entered the hacienda where they found the Don in a stew over the unexplained absence of his daughter.

"I found him, father," said Mercedes, "and he knows our secret."

The Don appeared quite overcome.

"You will be silent for my little girl's sake, will you not?" he said.

"On my word of honor," replied Jack. "I make no condition to you, but your brother must leave the country, or the arm of the law will surely reach him."

"He intends to as soon——"

"As he finds the treasure. That he never will, for Mercedes and I have found it, and we shall take means to hold on to it."

Jack told the Don how they came upon the treasure.

"The padres will not allow you to take it away," said the Don.

"On condition that they will I shall hand over to them everything but the ore ingots—thus they will recover all the church property through me and Mercedes, and I think we are entitled to our terms," said Jack.

Next morning Jack and Don Sastilano visited the monastery and secured an interview with the padre. Through the Don's influence an agreement was effected by which the silver ingots came into Jack's possession, and the rest of the treasure went to the church. That afternoon Jack saw Luis Castilano for the first time without his mask. He was the living image of the Don. At that interview he agreed to leave Mexico at once and send his men adrift after a division of the spoils.

Reader, I am done, for all that remains to tell is that three months later Jack was married to Mercedes in the church of San Pedro, with Bob as best man, and Clara as bridesmaid, and with his marriage the young American retired from the employ of Pickering & Co. and settled down at the hacienda with his lovely wife to enjoy life on the proceeds of the Treasure of San Pedro.

Next week's issue will contain "FRANK FISK, THE BOY BROKER; OR, WORKING THE WALL STREET STOCK MARKET."

"Moving Picture Stories," No. 308, contains an article entitled "HOW TO BECOME A MOVIE ACTOR." Buy a copy. Price 7 cents; postage free. HARRY E. WOLFF, 165 W. 23d St., N. Y.

CURRENT NEWS

DRANK A LOT OF BUTTERMILK TO GAIN WEIGHT

"I've heard of a tin soldier and a chocolate soldier for some years," said Sergt. Taylor of the local recruiting station, Salina, Kan., "but I never heard of a buttermilk soldier until the other day. He looked pretty good to me and he is now in Uncle Sam's army."

Harry O. Winter has been trying to get into the army for some time, but was always too light. He began drinking buttermilk. He visited the recruiting office daily. One day the scales showed he had gained a sufficient amount of weight to get by the Sergeant with his application.

He declares he drank so much buttermilk he detested the sight of it, and now he says: "No more buttermilk for me for a long, long time."

GEESE WEAR SHOES

There is probably no place in the world where geese are raised more extensively than in Poland. Warsaw is the greater center for the trade in these birds, and it is the town of Dvinsk, near which the Russian and German armies have been fighting so furiously of late, that has largely supplied the Warsaw market. Dvinsk, too, is probably the only place in the world where geese are shod. The Polish farmer does not send his birds to market in coops and by train. That would be a considerable expense. He drives them on the highway, the flock often numbering several hundred. That they may walk to Warsaw without getting sore feet he shoes them. They are first made to walk over a patch of road covered with warm tar, and then over another patch covered with sand. In this way the feet get a coat of tar and sand, and they make the journey without becoming footsore.

MICE AND RABBITS

Pine mice and cottontail rabbits do much harm to fruit and ornamental trees and to shrubs, as well as to garden and farm crops throughout the Eastern portion of the United States.

Pine mice are seldom seen on account of their mole-like habits, for they live in their own underground burrows or in mole runways. The presence of these mice in mole burrows can usually be detected by an occasional opening that they make to the surface from the runway. Pine mice are not so prolific as the meadow mice, but protected as they are by their underground habits they sometimes become abnormally abundant. This is especially apparent in states where hawks and owls, which are enemies of these rodents, are destroyed.

The most practical method of controlling this pest is by poisoning. Sweet potatoes cut into small pieces have proved to be the most effective bait. They are prepared as follows:

Sweet Potato Bait—Cut sweet potatoes into pieces about the size of large grapes. Moisten four quarts of these and drain off excess moisture. Slowly sift over them one-eighth ounce of powdered strychnine (alkaloid), using a pepper box or salt shaker for the purpose.

One or two pieces of the poisoned sweet potatoes should be dropped into the tunnels through the natural openings or through openings made with a stick. A systematic use of this poison invariably results in an almost complete extermination of pine mice. These pests are also easily trapped, but owing to the extra time and labor required this method does not compare favorably with poisoning.

MASSACHUSETTS' HISTORIC TREES

The part that trees play in the history of a state is shown by an index table of historic trees now standing in Massachusetts. The table, which was prepared for the New England Historic Genealogical Society, shows the association of trees with historic events extending through important periods since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers.

The most famous is the Washington Elm in Cambridge, under which General Washington took command of the little force of patriots that was called the American Army. It has been said that the troops could almost be sheltered under the elm's 95-foot spread of branches.

Other trees mark revolutionary incidents and events, with local, state or national significance, as the places where Washington rested or made an address, or watered his horses; where Lafayette stopped during his campaign in the patriot cause; where revolutionists had their rendezvous; where the Minute Men trained or took stand in actions against the British.

The Boxford Elm, a revolutionary meeting place, was the scene also of the signing of an important treaty in the days of the Indian wars, and under the Eliot Oak at South Natick John Eliot spread his gospel to the Indians. Famous speeches on abolition by the orators of the time were made among the trees at Island Grove in North Abington from 1846 through the Civil War.

A buttonwood tree at Charlemont with a spread of 85 feet is preserved as the place where the first settlers found shelter while they slept, and the Sheffield Elm was the camping place of the founder of that town and the scene of the town meetings, long afterward. The Paxton Elm marks the center of the state.

The Oakham Oak gave that town its name, and was a model for its town seal, and the Avery Oak at Dedham, also the model for the town seal, served as the site of the town's first religious meeting.

The oldest tree in the index is the Endicott Pear Tree at Danversport, planted by John Endicott in 1630. The greatest is the Rugg Elm at Framingham, with a spread of 145 feet. The famous "Great Elm" of Boston's earliest days is no more, but an off-shoot is recognized as Old Elm's Descendant. The Ancient Oaks, made famous in Longfellow's "Tales of a Wayside Inn," Hawthorne's Grove at Concord, favorite walk of the author; Louisa May Alcott's Elms, also at Concord, and Oliver Wendell Holmes's Pine at Pittsfield, are all treasured for the associations with those who named them.

Lost On Mt. Erebus

— OR —

A Boy Explorer At the South Pole

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER VIII.—Rescued from a Crevasse.

"Then, coming back to the bow, we ran on this motor sled. I suppose you forgot it or thought it was smashed. There was a good yawl boat come to light, too, when the stern of the ship washed off. I then made up my mind that we three would try the barrier by ourselves. I supposed you would wait in camp for the rescue ship, being as the captain was used up."

"It would have been a long, useless wait," said Joe, who with Madge and a final load of their things had rejoined the group. "Much better be trying to do something during the summer."

"So I reasoned," said Rucker, "and therefore we struck out on our own hook. But now we are together again, I don't mind going in company provided I'm the leader."

"You—the leader?" interrupted Madge. "You may lead, but don't think that I, for one, will follow, unless you are good."

"I've been on two polar cruises before this, after the North Pole. I was with the Norwegian, Borchgrevink in these same parts in 1900. Who is better fitted than me to lead in the Antarctic?"

Rucker, as he made this statement, looked so wild and peculiar that Hopper and Shouse nudged Joe and nodded knowingly.

"Keep quiet," whispered the boatwain. "He may be off his nut a bit, but we will keep him straight. We need his knowledge and we can head him off when he goes wrong."

"Honest, he is and will be," muttered Shouse. "He fairly hell us up a time or two; but, as he'd saved our lives in the start, my matey and I let it go, lest worse might come."

However, after these mutual explanation all around, a compromise was effected. The two parties agreed to stay together, much to Shouse and Hopper's satisfaction.

Rucker seemed to agree, especially when Dr. Carr and second mate Ord affirmed that Rucker should lead—at least—he the leader of the united force.

"I will simply not go near the man," affirmed Madge. "I think he is mad, and I know he is most disagreeable."

"You can always count on me to foil Rucker," whispered Joe.

"Be sure you stay with me always. If Mr. Rucker breaks loose again, we—you and I—can break loose from his company."

Two days they remained in the ice caves to re-escape. On the third the united parties started out again over the snow and ice, heading always

toward the south and gradually getting higher and higher as they penetrated inland. The observations showed at last a latitude equal to that attained by the expedition which Ben Rucker declared he had accomplished. This was over 78 degrees south.

The motor sled had so far done very well, but as they neared the high range where the polar volcano Mt. Erebus dominated the desolate landscape, the ice crevasses and snow-covered fissures became so numerous that Ord, Carr, Hawley and Madge wanted to abandon it, or at least to throw off the motor. They might save the gasoline for heating purposes, when necessary. But Rucker flew into one of his violent rages.

"Before I'll give up my motor," he shouted, "I'll take Shouse and Hopper and leave you."

At this time the entire party were contending with a southerly gale that filled the freezing air with snowy particles which stung the face like shot.

They had camped under some hummocks of ice in consequence. Most of the seal meat was gone, and tea and pemmican constituted the diet. Madge herself stood the fatigue and rough food remarkably well. The motor and even the sled could well be spared.

"Leave it to me," said Hawley to his friends. "When we load up in the morning put most of the eatables on the dog and pony sleds."

This was done. The motor was comparatively useless, and Rucker, who insisted on going before, had the two sailors push his sled.

The labor attached to this performance prevented his noticing how lightly the sled was loaded. Other members of the party took turns.

Hour after hour the party plodded on. Rucker, from being the leader, became finally the rear guard of the struggling procession.

Narrow defiles were threaded, and more than one glacier crossed during the next few days. Several times one or more of the party would disappear down some snow-covered fissure.

At one of these dangerous crossings Rucker's sled, at which he and Hawley were then toiling, suddenly disappeared.

Rucker was in front pulling. When the sled went down, Joe, who was looking for just this mischance and had prepared for it, braced himself and thrust his ice staff firmly into the ice ahead.

"Rucker's gone!" he shouted. "Come back, some of you, and help."

The others, looking around, saw only Hawley holding back from the crevasse, with his long staff braced in front against the rough ice and snow. Rucker and the sled had disappeared.

"Help him!" cried Madge, running back herself.

All the others, except Ord and Hopper, who were driving the pony and the dog teams, followed. Before they quite reached the spot, they saw Hawley's staff slip on the ice and the boy follow. Round his waist was a rope connecting him with Rucker, who was out of sight in the fissure.

(To be continued)

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES.

DROWNED IN WHISKY BARREL

Joseph Bostick, 30 years old, of Chester, Pa., was drowned in a whisky barrel half filled with water in the yard of his sister's home. The body was discovered by Charles Trainer, who noticed the man's leg protruding from the barrel.

BEES SWARM ON HIS FACE

George Berle of Barrington, N. J., got next to the ways of 10,000 bees, as many of them got next to him. But he was game and won out. In an effort to capture a large swarm in the center of the town he covered himself with netting and tried to coax the bees or shoo them into a barrel. The bees did not want to go, and finding a hole in the netting, made haste to swarm on Berle. Nothing daunted, Berle obtained a sheet and made a second attempt, succeeding in hiving the bees in the barrel.

WIND BLEW CHECK

A check found the other day on the Lewis Yape farm, a mile east of Deerfield, Mich., was blown out of the door of the store of Nutter & Renollet at Renollet, O., last March by the tornado which destroyed Raab's Corners. While working in a field Henry Yape noticed the check hanging to a weed. It was drawn for \$233.75 on the farmers' Banking Company of Paulding, O., by John Nutter in favor of Eli Ankney. The check has been returned to the Renollet store. According to maps, it traveled about 100 miles through the air.

SWAT FLIES ON CEILINGS

Flies that take refuge on the ceiling, at night or in cool weather, may be captured without difficulty. The handle is sawed from an old broom, and a tin lid is attached to the end by driving a large tack through it into the stick. The tack should be driven firmly to make the lid rest solidly and prevent leakage. The lid is partly filled with kerosene, and is held for a few seconds against the ceiling, directly under the fly. The insect, becoming more or less stupid with the cold, will be further stupefied by the fumes of the oil, and will drop into the lid.

BUENOS AYRES-NEW YORK SHIP MAKES RECORD TRIP

The fastest passage ever made between Buenos Ayres and New York, a distance of 6,992 miles, was completed on June 7 by the Lamport & Holt liner *Vesiris*, which dropped anchor in Quarantine at 3 a. m. and landed her passengers at Pier 9, Brooklyn, in the forenoon.

The *Vesiris* was delayed by lay-overs at Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro and Barbados, but despite this her actual steaming time from Buenos Ayres to Scotland Lightship, off this harbor, was 16 days 17 hours and 41 minutes. The previous record was held by the steamship *Vauban*, also of the Lamport & Holt Line, which made the run from Buenos Ayres to New York in 19 days 6 hours.

WHALE BATTLES SHIP

Showing the effects of a desperate fight with a huge sperm whale while ten miles south of Mount Edgecombe, Kruzof Island, near the entrance of Sitka Sound, Alaska, on June 15, the whaling steamer *Star III.*, Capt. L. P. Halls, Gunner G. Earling, reached Eagle Harbor after a successful season.

While taking one of the big mammals, which members of the crew described as "just like an ocean liner," the big fellow charged the steamer, damaging the gunwale, second towing chock on the starboard side and bending and crumpling a plate in the bulwarks for a distance of ten feet. The weight of the whale nearly swamped the little steamer.

INDIAN CHIEFS IN ADIRONDACKS

Chiefs Andrew Gibson and Jesse Lyons, high in the councils of the Iroquois League, made formal preliminary inspection the week of June 12, of the 17,000 acres of the Ga-Wan-Ka section, which is to be dedicated as a permanent memorial to the League of the Iroquois at Okara Park, near Thendara, June 26, with all the pomp and circumstances of the high rites of the People of the Long House.

In company with Captain H. D. Ovington of New York the chiefs inspected First and Second lakes of the Fulton chain, Lakes Ta-Jek-Ha and Ka-No-Tes on the Raquette Lake line, near Romdaxe, and from Bald Mountain looked out across the huge tract of forests, mountains, lakes and rivers which is to receive formal dedication and christening by the assembled chiefs of the Great League late this month, when Representative Homer P. Snyder, chairman of the United States Indian Affairs Committee, will be one of the principal speakers.

A portion of Ga-Wan-Ka along Moose River is to be reserved as a hunting camp for the use of warriors and hunters of the Six Nations. The chiefs located the site of the temporary Indian village of wigwams, which is to be erected for the occasion, and tentatively laid out the council circles to be used for the ceremonies. Thursday night a powwow was held at the Seneca reservation for the formulation of plans for the ceremony. Delegations of chiefs and head matrons from the various reservations of the State, together with seventy-five men, women and children from the Onondaga reservation at Syracuse, will participate in the dedicatory rites.

Invitations have been sent to Gov. Smith, members of the Conservation Commission, members of the New York State Indian Commission and various Assemblymen and Senators. It is expected that a number of the members of the United States Indian Affairs Committee will accompany Representative Snyder.

More than thirty square miles of wilderness are included in the tract to be dedicated, which lies in one of the most familiar portions of the Adirondacks and includes a dozen large and small lakes. The name Ga-Wan-Ka is Iroquois for playground.

THE HIDDEN WEALTH

By COL. RALPH FENTON.

"Do you see yonder green isle in the distance?"

The one who asked the question was my fellow traveler, on board a fine steamer plying between New York and the West Indies, and just before sunset a small green island came in view, looking most inviting in the haze of the distance.

"Yes, it is a pretty spot, and doubtless in olden times was the resort of the Gulf buccaneers."

"It has a story since that time, and if you like I will tell it you," replied Fred Fenton, for such was his name, and he continued to gaze upon the island with a look of interest, as though memories of a strange character were crowding upon him.

Seeing that I was waiting for his story, he said, having thrown away his cigar:

"Fifteen years ago I was on that island, helpless, and in despair, and the causes that led to it I will tell you of.

"When sixteen years of age I became a midddy in the royal navy, and about the same time fell desperately in love with a pretty girl, some four years my junior, and whose old father was as proud as he was rich, and was willing to let daughter and money go for title and name, no matter who might possess the latter qualities in his estimation.

"But the young girl—Alfrida Doane was her name—returned my youthful regard, and when I went to sea we agreed that death alone could part us in the future, and, strange to say, when I returned from China seas three years later, we had both remained true to each other, but her father was already looking for a titled individual upon whom to bestow her hand, and his eyes fell upon my brother, who had just inherited the title and estates through my father's death.

"At fifteen Alfrida was a beautiful maiden, and promised to be a still more lovely woman, and as our family was poor, my brother, Sir Wilber, was willing to be sacrificed for a handsome heiress, and it was agreed between the father and himself that when the young girl became eighteen, the exchange of money for rank would take place.

"But to this both Alfrida and myself objected, and a most stormy scene followed between old Banker Doane and myself, he telling me very plainly that I was a mere pauper, with nothing but my pay and a few hundred pounds a year to live on—a very comfortable sum, I assure you, though not a fortune.

"Make a fortune and you can marry any woman," he very coldly told me.

"I replied that I would take his advice and marry Alfrida, at which he raved like a maniac.

"In the navy I felt that I could not make a fortune, and as there was no war going on, promotion was slow, so I resigned my commission, invested what money I had saved up, and could sell out my commission for, in a mercantile house in London, and in one year lost every penny I had in the world.

"This was a bad beginning, and too proud to ask aid I went on a sailor before the mast, and in a very short while worked my way up to boatswain, and then third mate.

"I would, I think, have soon been in command of a brig, for the company whose vessel I was on seemed to like me; but one day as I sat on the deck, watching the passengers go on board a large clipper ship, a packet between Liverpool and Havana, I started suddenly at recognizing Banker Doane and his daughter.

"They were accompanied by his valet and Alfrida's maid, and it was evident, from their traps and baggage, they were going upon a voyage, and instantly my mind was made up—I would go on the ship too.

"To get my luggage together, write my resignation and send it in to the owners and then go on board the ship was the work of an hour.

"I secured a good stateroom and remained in it until the vessel was dashing down the channel.

"It was just twilight when I went on deck, and with a beating heart I recognized Alfrida pacing the deck and leaning upon her father's arm, and I kept aloof until the following day, when I saw her, and alone, for it had come to blow, and the old banker was down in his berth, cursing himself for having been fooled into going on a pleasure voyage to the Indies and America.

"I can tell you, my friend, it was a surprise indeed, and a joyous one, when Alfrida recognized me.

"For a long time we talked together, and she told me that it was her father's intention to remain away from England about a year, and upon their return home she was to marry my brother Wilber.

"And she added that it would drive her father wild to find that I was on board, for he had taken to hating me ever since I had told him I would one day marry his daughter, and match his fortune with one equal to his own.

"I confess it did not look as though I was going to keep my word, at the rate I had begun, but both Alfrida and myself had hope, and we again pledged our love, and she promised to wait for me for half a century.

At length Doane came on deck, pale, ill and impatient, but the sight of me on board cured his seasickness, and he swore like a sailor, and wanted the captain to put back and land me, or himself and daughter, but the clipper's commander had an inkling of how matters stood and simply enjoyed it.

"Well, all went well until we got into these waters, and then one night a hurricane struck us, we were hurled about like a straw, the captain was washed overboard, the first mate had his arm broken, and the next officer losing presence of mind, the crew and passengers called upon me to take the command, which I did, but it was a sinking ship, and I felt that we must take to the lifeboats.

"I had them got ready and equipped with stores and water, and as they were filled with passengers and crew, I ordered them off, and thus all went well until I attempted to get on board the last boat, and in which was Alfrida and her father, the old man having asked to go with me, when a wave snapped the ropes, and I was left alone upon the sinking craft.

"It was a fearful night, and as dark as death, and the crew refused to risk their boat coming back to the ship after me, and unheeded the en-

treaties of Alfrida and also her father, whose selfish fear for himself alone wanted to have me on board.

"The vessel was sinking fast, there was no other boat for me to take, and I gave myself up for lost, while the old wreck drove through the waters with terrible speed, and then suddenly ran upon the shore with a shock that threw me to the deck.

"Yonder island you see is the place where she went ashore, and the waves carried me to the beach, where I was thrown more dead than alive, but I struggled hard for life, and, reaching a place of safety, sank down to rest.

"When I awoke, or revived, for I believe I was unconscious, it was broad daylight, the beach was strewn with wrecks, the sea was still rough, and not a sail was in sight upon the boundless waters.

"I gathered the water-soaked food, built me a hut and sat down to wait, having discovered that I was on a comfortable island, where I at least would not starve, although I knew it to be uninhabited.

"It is said a 'fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind,' and I found myself making daily pilgrimages to a lonely spot where was a grave, a rude board at its head, and I felt that the only one who slept beneath had, like me, been a victim of the sea.

"Upon the headboard was cut, with a knife, and skilfully executed too—

"BOB BULWARK,

A seaman of the British brig, Bird.

Wrecked on this island

Sept. 10th, 18—.

Stranger, let his ashes rest in peace."

"One night, as I sat gazing out over the moonlit waters, my eyes caught sight of a small sail, and, watching it closely, I saw that it was standing directly inshore, towards a cove above which hung the high cliff upon which was the grave.

"But it seemed strange to me that so small a craft, a little sloop of five tons, should be coming to that out-of-the-way place, and I set down the crew as having been wrecked on some other island, and were making their way back to the nearest port.

"Dropping anchor close ashore, and running in as though they knew the waters well, the crew of two men came on shore, carrying something upon their shoulders, and began to ascend the cliff, heading in my direction.

"I at once sought a place of concealment in some bushes near the grave, and soon the men drew near and halted.

"'You're the boss pilot, Dick, for here she is, as natural as life,' said one of the men, glancing at the head-board and throwing at his feet a shovel.

"I told you I knew a secret, for I was here when poor Bob Bulwark was planted, and there was fire of us as did it; one of them was washed off the schooner in a storm, another was killed in a fight with a cruiser; the captain and lieutenant were garroted in Havana for piracy, and just escaped from prison after fifteen years, but leaving this spot, lad, and I'm rich at last."

"And you buried it fifteen years ago?"

"We did, and there's enough to make a hundred men rich, if it's there, and I think it is, for the grave hasn't been touched, it seems."

"Eagerly I watched the two men throw the earth from the supposed grave, now well knowing that a treasure, and not a human form, lay beneath, for that one of the men was the last of a pirate crew that had buried it there, I felt confident after hearing his words.

"At length the shovel of one struck a hard substance, and a moment after the man addressed as Dick handed up a small keg, and then another, and another, and all of them were filled with gold.

"A large box filled with gold and silver trinkets and precious stones followed, until a fortune indeed lay in the light of the moon, and its glittering wealth seemed to craze the man who had come for the treasure, as springing from the open grave, he turned and brought his shovel down upon the head of his comrade with terrible force, crying out:

"Fool, die; for did you think I would let any man live and share this fortune with me?"

"Oh, Dick!" burst from the man's lips, and he sank forward and well into the open pit.

"With the frenzy of a madman the murderer shoveled in the dirt upon him, and then began to dance in wild glee. Then was my time to act, and I came from my place of concealment.

"With a wild cry he started back, and then seizing the spade, rushed upon me.

"Like a madman he fought, biting and scratching like a tiger; but I am a powerful man, and finding he was determined to kill me, wrenched his knife from his hand and drove it into his breast, just as he thrust his left hand into his bosom for a pistol.

"Into the grave I placed his body, and then, almost maddened myself by the gold before me, seized a couple of the kegs, and rushed down to the sloop with them.

"I found it, as I had expected, unoccupied, and a staunch little craft, and, having gotten my treasure on board, set sail from the island, and within a week's time ran into Pensacola.

"Jealous of the secret I had, I was most careful, and in small quantities carried it to my hotel, where I deposited it in a stout trunk, and, selling the sloop, started for New York in a packet ship.

"Once there, to my joy, I learned that Alfrida and her father, with another of the boats, had arrived in safety, and, turning my treasure into bank-notes, I purchased a handsome house, invested my fortune in the shipping business, and set sail for England, where I arrived just in time; for, believing me dead, Alfrida had promised to become the wife of my brother Wilber.

"My coming changed the tide of affairs, for she became my bride, and returned with me to the United States, and a happier family than ours I know you never saw, and will say so when you visit us, as you have promised, upon your return.

"Now, do you wonder that I look at yonder island with interest, having passed one long year upon it alone, suffering and in sorrow, and in the end found there my fortune?"

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

WILD BOAR PRIZE ENOUGH

The French Ministry of Agriculture had a prize of fifty francs for every wild boar weighing over thirty kilograms that was killed and of ten francs for every little one. It has just withdrawn this, giving as the reason that, with all meat at such high prices, the flesh of a wild boar ought to be quite sufficient reward for killing it.

GIRL 3, STARVES TO DEATH

Mystery surrounding the disappearance of the two children of Mr. and Mrs. John Brochak of Osceola Mills, Pa., was solved when Julia, three years old, was found dead from starvation and exhaustion, and Anna, 5, was a raving maniac. Searchers came upon them near the Stine coal mine, two miles from their home. Anna fought her rescuers and tried to get away. She is in the hospital at Phillipsburg.

HOUSE IN WHICH GARFIELD DIED
DESTROYED BY FIRE

The last of the famous houses associated with the name of President Garfield disappeared at Long Branch, N. J., June 15, when fire destroyed the shore cottage where the President spent his last days. The blaze is believed to have started from spontaneous combustion. The house was owned by the Fidelity Trust Company. Fred Sells, a New York broker, rented the place recently and was to have moved into it.

After Garfield was shot, in September, 1881, his physician ordered him to have sea air. When he expressed a preference for Long Branch Charles G. Francklyn, then owner of the cottage, offered its use. Garfield died there, September 19, 1881.

THE SELF-RELIANT RAVEN

The literary history of the raven begins with Noah and Elijah. Naturalists call him "the most wary, the most amusing, the cleverest of birds." He has also been described as grave, dignified and sedate, and many instances have been given of the peculiarities of this historical bird.

The bill of the raven is a formidable weapon, strong, stout, sharp at the edges, curved toward the tip. It is his one weapon of offence, but it

answers the purpose of two or three. Like the dirk of the old time plainsman, it is equally available as a dagger or as a carving knife. It can also be used as a pair of pincers. It can kill a rat at one blow. The raven can drive its beak right through the spines of a hedgehog. It is said that the raven will never attack a man. If this be true, it is, it is thought, not so much from any defect of courage as from the bird's keen intellectual perception of what will pay and what will not.

Like most of his tribe, the raven is, in the strictest sense of the word, omnivorous. His dietary ranges from "a worm to a whale."

When his nest is built, as it generally is, beneath some overhanging rock which quite conceals it from view from above, its position may sometimes be discovered by the remains of rabbit neatly laid in the short grass at the top of the cliff in what might be called his "larder." But a larder implies an amount of economy and self-restraint that it is not in the raven to practise.

In districts where food is scarce the ravens will attack without scruple a newly born lamb or even a sheep that has been cast.

The raven has a passion for solitude. He will tolerate no rival, not even his own offspring, in the neighborhood of his throne. He drives them rustlessly away as soon as they are able to shift for themselves.

LAUGHS

Ambitious Author—Hurry! Five dollars for my latest story, "The Call of the Lure." **Fast Friend**—Whom from? **Ambitious Author**—The express company. They lost it.

Mrs. Nexdore—Why won't you let your Willie play baseball with the other boys? **Mrs. Greene**—A part of the game, I understand, is stealing bases, and I'm afraid it might have a bad influence.

"Oh, what a shame! I am inexpressibly shocked to hear it. And how soon after your marriage did he begin to display the cloven hoof?" "Why, at just about the same time he began to cultivate the cloven breath."

This is a quotation from a Connecticut woman's diary, dated 1790: "We had roast pork for dinner, and Doctor S., who carved, held up a rib on his fork and said: 'Here, ladies, is what Mother Eve was made of.' 'Yes,' said Sister Patty, 'and it's from very much the same kind of critter.'"

In the midst of a wintry wood a traveler in a sledge fled before a pack of famished wolves. As soon as he could feel their hot breath on his cheek he muttered: "It's time!" drew his sword, struck off his left arm, and threw it to the howling, hungry beasts. But only to gain thereby a temporary respite. In a few moments they were upon him once more, whereat he drew his sword a second time, struck off his right arm, and threw that out likewise.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

USE SEAPLANES TO HUNT WHALES

Business men at Aalesund, north of Bergen, Norway, intend during the coming summer to use seaplanes for seal and whale hunting in Denmark Strait, between Iceland and Greenland, says the National Tidende. The first machines will probably be sent up in a week or so.

LINCOLN'S ONLY FARM

A stone's throw from the Lincoln Highway and a few miles out of Denison, Ia., lies the only piece of ground Abraham Lincoln ever owned. It is rather a poor farm as Iowa farms go, for it is rough and hilly, good only for stock feeding. It is hard to find and he who seeks it must wander around in the hills out of Denison before he locates it. The farm was deeded to Lincoln for his services in the Blackhawk War and though he never lived on it there is reason to believe that he was planning, when public life was over, to retire to his Iowa farm and spend the remainder of his days there near the road which now bears his name.

METEOR FALLS IN OKLAHOMA

Geologists will study the huge meteor which fell and burned itself out near Okmulgee, Okla., the other night after lighting the skies over several southwestern States. Hundreds of persons in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and Oklahoma watched the meteor's flight, reports received here said. Scores of motor cars clogged the roads leading to where the burning mass fell.

Considerable apprehension among the people living near Fort Smith, Ark., was caused. They thought the meteor fell near Red Oak, Okla., about 25 miles distant. A number of persons in automobiles went from Wilburton, Okla., and nearby towns to Red Oak to give aid.

Tulsa, Okla., reported that when the meteor passed over that city it appeared to be within a few hundred yards of the earth and that the lower and heavier portion, of a greenish blue color, was followed by a long wedge-shaped tail. As it approached the earth, the report stated, the head remained together as a mass. During the last few seconds of the fall the southern sky was lighted with a blue-green flash.

C. B. Smith, an astronomic authority at Muskogee, said he believed the meteor was thrown off from a destroyed planet between Jupiter and Mars, as it appeared to travel from west to east.

KOH-I-NOOR STORY INCOMPLETE

All the world has heard of the Koh-i-noor, or, as it has been sometimes called, the Great Mogul diamond, and it would seem that there was nothing more to be said about it. Yet in point of fact not a tenth part of its history has ever been traced, so far does it extend back into the vistas of the past, writes Eleanor Maddock in Asia. Perhaps one of the strangest things about it is that it cannot be lost to the world indefinitely. It was bricked and plastered up in a wall and miraculously found after its former owner had been murdered. It was twice thrown away

as a bit of glass and once went to the laundry in the pocket of an Englishman's linen suit.

This matchless gem is called in India the "Mountain of Light" and the "Talisman of Kings;" the latter because it was said to bring sovereignty to its possessor. Strangely enough, after it fell into the hands of a Turkish slave of illegitimate origin, a line known as the "Slave Kings" sat on the throne of Delhi for eighty years, during which period the desire to possess the talisman amounted to a frenzied obsession. Suddenly it disappeared from their possession in the chaos of slaughter that brought the slave dynasty to an end in 1290.

The Koh-i-noor later scintillated without bloodshed through the reign of Shah Jahan down to his son Aurangzeb, who exhibited it to a number of Europeans whom he was entertaining at his court. Among them was Tavernier, the French jeweler, who later wrote a descriptive account of it for the delectation of Europe. After being tossed like a shuttlecock in the Delhi loot, and remaining for a period of years with the Sikhs in the Punjab, this most celebrated diamond in the world now rests on a purple velvet cushion among England's crown jewels, in the grim old Tower of London.

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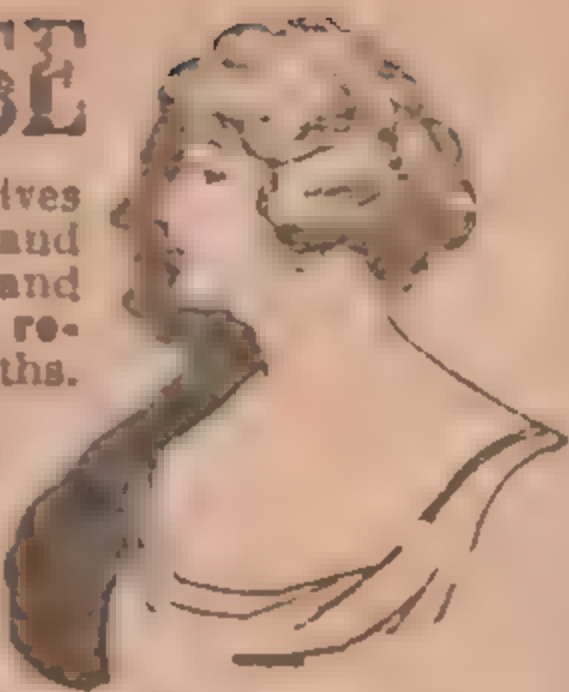
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Sore or open legs, ulcers, enlarged veins, eczema healed while you work. Write for free book and describe your own case. L. C. Liepe, 1457 Green Bay Av., Milwaukee, Wis.

BELIEVED DEAD

Forty-four years ago Frank Hamp left Swanton, O., for the West, going to Kansas. A short time afterward word was received that he was dead, and relatives gave up hopes of seeing him again.

He dropped into Swanton one day recently, inquired about himself, and finally made himself known to his aged mother and other relatives. He is now wealthy, owning a ranch consisting of four sections.

One or two letters came from Hamp to his mother after he left for Kansas. Then a report came that he, with other white men, had been captured by Indians, tortured and killed.

Hamp kept pushing West with the early settlers, and bettered himself at each change. Only once did he see a person from this vicinity, and then he was told his parents were dead.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

A QUEER SAPPHIRE

There is exhibited in the National Museum at Washington a sapphire weighing nine karats, which contains a bubble that appears and disappears with changes of temperature. It is believed that a cavity in the gem incloses a quantity of carbonic acid gas under great pressure. When the temperature is such as to correspond with the "critical point" for that gas, under the particular pressure to which it is subjected in its brilliant prison house, it liquefies and becomes visible as a bubble.

QUICKSILVER DEPOSITS IN ARIZONA

The present exceptional demand for quicksilver in the manufacture of fulminate gives the domestic deposits of this metal particular interest. Deposits recently discovered in the southern part of the Phoenix Mountains, ten miles northeast of Phoenix, Ariz., are described in a short paper prepared by F. C. Schrader, just published by the United States Geological Survey. The deposits are easy of access, and, being near the rich agricultural region of Salt River Valley, are otherwise favorably situated for mining. They are being exploited on six or more properties or groups of claims, which lie in a belt, about three miles wide.

BRITISH DEVELOPMENT OF MESOPOTAMIA

In spite of war conditions this year's harvest in Mesopotamia is expected to be the greatest in many years. The British are reported to have dug out more than 100 canals formerly used for irrigation purposes in connection with the River Euphrates but disused for many years. Some 320,000 acres have been brought afresh under cultivation.

Since the British occupation Bagdad is full of life; construction work is being carried on early and late and thousands of workmen are repaving the streets and installing electric light and sanitation. A fire brigade and a police force have been organized. The supply of pure water is assured, the water pipes being constantly extended. Many other improvements have been inaugurated.

And so ancient ruins blossom forth most modernly.

GUM STOPS GAS LEAK

When it comes to resourcefulness leave it to Mrs. Ernest Byfield and Miss Elaine V. Rosenthal, embryo motor mechanics who are fitting themselves for service in the Motor Supply Corps, Chicago, Ill.

A little thing like a gas tank leak is nothing to them, even if it does happen way out on a country road. So when they were motoring along and had to stop because of it, Mrs. Byfield suggested that chewing gum would stop the leak, since they had nothing better. It did, but they had to chew 110 sticks, which they purchased at a nearby store to get the desired effect. Yes, they could still talk and tell about it when they got back despite the stiffness of their jaws.

A VALUABLE PIPE

The Shah of Persia possesses, perhaps, the most valuable pipe in the world. It is the Persian pipe, and is smoked only on state occasions. It is set with rubies and diamonds, and is valued at \$100,000. When the Shah is not using the pipe it is kept in a glass case and carefully guarded by a high court official, whose duties, we learn from a Paris contemporary, are as little onerous as those of the director of an arsenal. The reason for keeping the pipe so closely guarded, and in a case, is that some years ago a grand vizier was surprised in the act of removing some of the stones with the point of his poniard. What happened to the grand vizier we are not told.

HOPE OF A NEW POWER

One of those tremendously important little items which get buried in the news pages because of their briefness, but which really deserve flaming headlines, was that Italy's most famous chemist has announced the discovery of a cheap method for obtaining "liquid hydrogen"—that is, hydrogen gas in a liquid form.

The importance of this discovery, which, because of the standing of its author, may be assumed to be authentic, is that it opens up the possibility and carries the hope of producing a new and practically unlimited source of liquid fuel for internal combustion engines of the motor type. Moreover, it is a tremendously powerful fuel.

Liquid hydrogen, burned in motor cylinders, is capable of driving an average automobile all of 250 miles per gallon. More than this, since hydrogen composes two-thirds of all the water of the globe, the basis of supply is inexhaustible. Only the cost of producing gas and reducing it to a form in which it could be utilized has stood in the way of its use as a fuel. The component gases of water form potentially the largest available future source of motor fuel.

Wonderful Victory Over Baldness

HAIR GROWN ON MR. BRITTAIN'S BALD HEAD BY INDIAN'S MYSTERIOUS OINTMENT

Now has Prolific Hair and Will Give True Recipe Free; it is Scientifically Verified

My head at the top and back was absolutely bald. The scalp was shiny. An expert said that as he thought the hair roots were extinct, and there was no hope of my ever having a new hair growth.

Yet, now, at the age of 68, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness.

Indians' Secret of Hair Growth

At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian "medicine man" who had an elixir that he guaranteed would grow my hair. Although I had no faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement, a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a regular healthy growth and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was amazed and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly.

Hair Grew Luxuriantly.

Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade.

It became my sudden determination to possess the recipe or secret if I could. Having used my most persuasive arguments which convinced the aged savant of my sincerity, and that he had only fairness to expect from me, I succeeded in gaining the secret recipe by giving him a valuable rifle in exchange.

I Put the Secret Away

My regular business took all my time, however, and I was compelled to forego my plans to introduce the wonderful ko-tal-ko (which I call for short kotalko) and I put the secret aside for some years.

That my own hair-growth was permanent has been amply proven.

My honest belief is that hair roots rarely die, even when the hair falls out through dandruff, fever, excessive dryness or other disorders. I am convinced, and am sure, many scientists will agree, that the hair roots become imbedded within the scalp, covered by hard skin, so that they are like bulbs or seeds in a bottle which will grow when fertilized. Shampoos (which contain alkalis) and hair lotions which contain alcohol are enemies to the hair, as they dry it, making it brittle.

The Secret Now Revealed

Recently I was induced, while on a business trip to London, to introduce kotalko, the Indian hair elixir. It met with an immediate demand, and has since been introduced throughout England and France, where, despite the war, it is having a great sale. Its popularity comes chiefly from the voluntary endorsements of users. Many persons—men, women and children—are reporting new hair growth. Some cases were really more extraordinary than my own. For instance, a lady reported that kotalko grew a beautiful supply of blonde hair (her natural shade) after her head had been completely bald since a fever nine years previously, and she had worn a wig ever since.

A military officer had a bald spot which had been growing larger for some time. Within a few weeks it was completely covered. I could mention numerous examples. Now, having made arrangements here, I intend to supply kotalko according to the genuine Indian's formula to whomsoever wishes to obtain it. Ten cents will bring a testing box to you.

Recipe Given Free

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NEW THINGS.

Railroad builders in South Africa have enabled work to be done at night by equipping a freight car with an electric plant and mounting searchlights on projecting arms.

The original home and laboratory of Joseph Priestley, who discovered oxygen in 1774, will be erected on the campus of Pennsylvania State College as a memorial to him.

Gasoline cars on an Australian railway have wedge-shaped ends, it having been found that the air resistance to the old type cars caused the use of 40 per cent. more fuel.

Designed for garages is a new fire pail made to contain two chemicals in separate compartments, which, thrown together on an oil fire, unite and form a flame smothering foam.

The rear end of an automobile locker of English invention is made of ground glass, on which a car's number can be painted and illuminated at night by a lamp inside the locker.

Peru has established a school of military aviation and has purchased twelve French airplanes, airplanes, while two seaplane services between coast ports are planned.

LITTLE ADS

Write to Riker & King, Advertising Offices, 118 East 28th Street, New York City, or 8 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, for particulars about advertising in this magazine.

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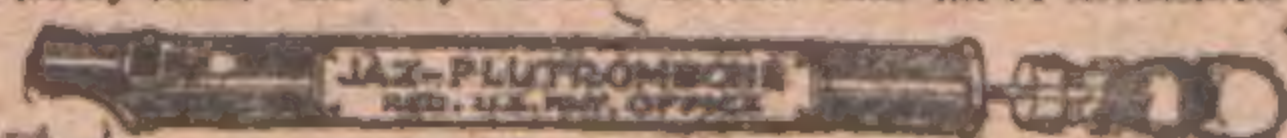
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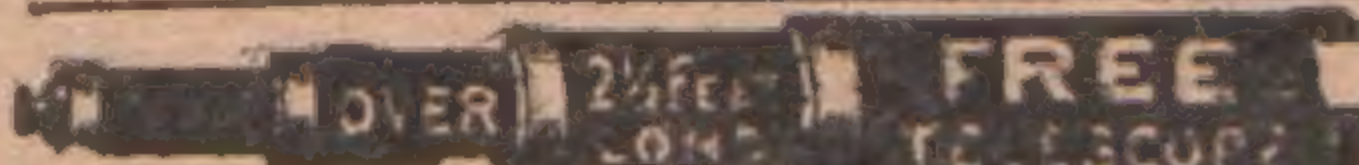
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A REMARK-ABLE WELL.

One of the most remarkable wells in Oklahoma is owned by J. C. McSpadden, at Tahlequah. This well not only furnishes an abundance of pure water, almost ice-cold in the summer time, but it affords a supply of chilled air, which is utilized for a cooling plant that keeps the McSpadden home cooler on the hottest day than any summer resort within a thousand miles. It is a freak well all around. When the well was sunk it was for a cistern. When about fifty feet deep the bottom broke through, revealing a sort of cavern, in which there was a tremendous flow of ice-cold water. Apparently this is an inexhaustible supply, for the well was sunk years ago and the well water has remained at the same level ever since. Taking advantage of the freak well's supply of cold air, McSpadden sealed the top of the well with a concrete cap and placed pipes in it. Through one of these he draws his water supply. Through the others he draws a supply of cold air that is piped through every room of his six-room house.

Bees, said to be the most intelligent of insects, have a remarkable knowledge of time. Professor Conklin, of the University of Pennsylvania, is of the opinion that bees have also a powerful memory, which is the reason, he asserts, that a bee flying half a mile away from its hive returns safely to its shelter. It observes closely the landmarks passed on the outward journey.

An owner of several hives of bees, noting the diligence they observed in their work, was induced to investigate if time could be accurately gauged by his swarms. For several weeks he had his meals on the terrace of his house, breakfast being served promptly at seven o'clock, when preserves were used as a light repart.

Most of the contents of the table were allowed to remain until luncheon at 10 a. m. At noon the mid-day meal was served, but without sweets. At 4 p. m. there was a light lunch, with sweets, which remained on the table for half an hour or so. As a further inducement, a dish of stewed cherries was put to cool on a window near by, and in a few hours the whole swarm of bees were sucking the sweet juice.

This incited the bees to visit the window regularly. The dish was afterward moved to the table, and was discovered by one of their number. On the morrow several companies were at the feast, and every day the number increased. At first the bees arrived at all hours, but soon they realized there was "nothing doing" between 7 and 10 a. m. and 4 p. m., so the visits were ceased except at the meal hours.

This ingenious bee clock in time became the gardener's timepiece, and for months they were "rung on" at 7 a. m. to commence work, almost mechanically the insect-gong sounded promptly at 10 a. m. for lunch, and work was ceased as the bees chimed out the hour of 4 p. m.

WOLF CAUGHT IN WIRE FENCE.

James Holman, a farmer living in the Bratton Union neighborhood, Neb., procured an extra fine wolf pelt for a robe in a peculiar way. Recently he and his little daughter were walking along the road when their attention was attracted to a large gray wolf which was struggling in the meshes of a woven wire fence. Holman left his little girl to guard the wolf while he went to a neighboring farm and borrowed a gun. He returned and shot the animal, which proved to be a large timber wolf.

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